





William Thomson







THE  
**POEMS OF OSSIAN,**

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

WITH

DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

*Era and Poems of Ossian;*

AND

DR. BLAIR'S CRITICAL DISSERTATION.

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# TEMORA,

AN EPIC POEM.

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## BOOK I.

### ARGUMENT,

Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, lord of Atha, in Con-naught, the most potent chief of the race of the Fir-bolg, having murdered, at Temora, the royal palace. Cormac, the son of Artho, the young king of Ireland, usurped the throne. Cormac was lineally descended from Conar, the son of Trenmor, the great-grandfather of Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the western coast of Scotland. Fingal resented the behaviour of Cairbar, and resolved to pass over into Ireland with an army, to re-establish the royal family on the Irish throne. Early intelligence of his designs coming to Cairbar, he assembled some of his tribes in Ulster, and at the same time ordered his brother Cathmor to follow him speedily with an army from Temora. Such was the situation of affairs when the Caledonian invaders appeared on the coast of Ulster.

The poem opens in the morning. Cairbar is represented as retired from the rest of the army, when one of his scouts brought him news of the landing of Fingal. He assembles a council of his chiefs. Foldath, the chief of Moma, haughtily despises the enemy; and is reprimanded warmly by Malthos. Cairbar, after hearing their debate, orders a feast to be prepared, to which, by his bard Olla, he invites Oscar, the son of Ossian; resolving to pick a quarrel with that hero, and so have some pretext for killing him. — Oscar came to the feast;

the quarrel happened; the followers of both fought, and Cairbar and Oscar fell by mutual wounds. The noise of the battle reached Fingal's army, The king came on, to the relief of Oscar, and the Irish fell back to the army of Cathmor, who was advanced to the banks of the river Lubar, on the heath of Moi-lena. Fingal, after murmuring over his grandson, ordered Ullin the chief of his bards to carry his body to Morven, to be there interred. Night coming on, Althan, the son of Connacher, relates to the king the particulars of the murder of Cormac. Fillan, the son of Fingal, is sent to observe the motions of Cathmor by night, which concludes the action of the first day. The scene of this book is a plain, near the hill of Mora, which rose on the borders of the heath of Moi-lena in Ulster.

THE blue waves of Erin roll in light. The mountains are covered with day. Trees shake their dusky heads in the breeze. Grey torrents pour their noisy streams. Two green hills, with aged oaks, surround a narrow plain. The blue course of a stream is there. On its banks stood Cairbar of Atha. His spear supports the king: the red eye of his fear is sad. Cormac rises in his soul, with all his ghastly wounds. The grey form of the youth appears in darkness. Blood pours from his airy side. Cairbar thrice threw his spear on earth. Thrice he stroked his beard. His steps are short. He often stops. He tosses his sinewy arms. He is like a cloud in the desert, varying its form to every blast. The valleys are sad around, and fear, by turns, the shower! The king at length resumed his soul. He took his pointed spear. He turned his eye to Moi-lena. The scouts of blue ocean came. They came with steps of fear and often looked behind. Cairbar knew that the mighty were near! He called his gloomy chiefs.

The sounding steps of his warriors came. They drew at once their swords. There Morlath stood with darkened face. Hiddallan's long hair sighs in the wind. Red-haired Cormar bends on his spear, and rolls his sidelong-looking eyes. Wild is the look of Maithos from beneath two shaggy brows. Foldath stands like an oozy rock, that covers its dark sides with foam. His spear is like Slimora's fir, that meets the wind of heaven. His shield is marked with the strokes of battle. His red eye despises danger. These and a thousand other chiefs surrounded the king of Erin, when the scout of ocean came, Mor-annal, from streamy Moi-lena. His eyes hang forward from his face. His lips are trimbling pale.

"Do the chiefs of Erin stand," he said, "silent as the grove of evening? Stand they, like a silent wood, and Fingal on the coast? Fingal, who is terrible in battle, the king of streamy Morven!" "Hast thou seen the warrior?" said Cairbar with a sigh. "Are his heroes many on the coast? Lifts he the spear of battle? or comes the king in peace?" "In peace he comes not, king of Erin! I have seen his forward-spear\*. It is a meteor of death. The blood of thousands is on its steel. He came first to the shore, strong in the grey hair of age. Full rose his sinewy limbs as he strode in his might. That sword

\* Mor-annal here alludes to the particular appearance of Fingal's spear. If a man, upon his first landing in a strange country, kept the point of his spear forward, it denoted in those days, that he came in a hostile manner, and accordingly he was treated as an enemy; if he kept the point behind him, it was a token of friendship, and he was immediately invited to the feast, according to the hospitality of the times.

is by his side, which gives no second wound. His shield is terrible, like the bloody moon, ascending through a storm. Then came Ossian king of songs. Then Morni's son, the first of men. Connal leaps forward on his spear. Dermid spreads his dark brown locks. Fillan bends his bow, the young hunter of streamy Moruth. But who is that before them, like the terrible course of a stream? It is the son of Ossian, bright between his locks! His long hair falls on his back. His dark brows are half-enclosed in steel. His sword hangs loose on his side. His spear glitters as he moves. I fled from his terrible eyes, king of high Temora!"

"Then fly, thou feeble man," said Foldath's gloomy wrath, "Fly to the grey streams of thy land, son of the little soul! Have not I seen that Oscar? I beheld the chief in war. He is of the mighty in danger: but there are others who lift the spear. Erin has many sons as brave, king of Temora of groves. Let Foldath meet him in his strength. Let me stop this mighty stream. My spear is covered with blood. My shield is like the wall of Tura!"

"Shall Foldath alone meet the foe?" replied the dark-browed Malthos. "Are they not on our coast, like the waters of many streams? Are not these the chiefs who vanquished Swaran, when the sons of green Erin fled? Shall Foldath meet their bravest hero? Foldath of the heart of pride! Take the strength of the people; and let Malthos come. My sword is red with slaughter, but who has heard my words?"

"Sons of green Erin," said Hidalla, "let not Fingal hear your words. The foe might rejoice, and his arm be strong in the land. Ye are brave, O warriors! Ye are tempests in war. Ye are like storms,

which meet the rocks without fear, and overturn the woods. But let us move in our strength, slow as a gathered cloud ! Then shall the mighty tremble ; the spear shall fall from the hand of the valiant. We see the cloud of death, they will say, while shadows fly over their face. Fingal will mourn in his age. He shall behold his flying fame. The steps of his chiefs will cease in Morven. The moss of years shall grow in Selma."

Cairbar heard their words, in silence, like the cloud of a shower : it stands dark on Cromala, till the lightning bursts its sides. The valley gleams with heaven's flame ; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora ; at length his words broke forth. " Spread the feast on Moi-lena. Let my hundred bards attend. Thou red-haired Olla, take the harp of the king. Go to Oscar chief of swords. Bid Oscar to our joy. To-day we feast and hear the song ; to-morrow break the spears ! Tell him that I have raised the tomb of Cathol ; that bards gave his friends to the winds. Tell him that Cairbar has heard of his fame, at the stream of resounding Carun. Cathmor my brother is not here. He is not here with his thousands, and our arms are weak. Cathmor is a foe to strife at the feast. His soul is bright as the sun. But Cairbar must fight with Oscar, chiefs of woody Temora. His words for Cathol were many : the wrath of Cairbar burns. He shall fall on Moi-lena. My fame shall rise in blood."

Their faces brightend round with joy. They spread over Moi-lena. The feast of shells is prepared. The songs of bards arise. The chiefs of Selma heard their joy. We thought that mighty Cathmor came. Cathmor the friend of strangers ;

the brother of red-haired Cairbar. Their souls were not the same. The light of heaven was in the bosom of Cathmor. His towers rose on the banks of Atha ; seven paths led to his halls. Seven chiefs stood on the paths, and called the stranger to the feast ! But Cathmor dwelt in the wood, to shun the voice of praise !

Olla came with his songs. Oscar went to Cairbar's feast ! Three hundred warriors strode along Moi-lena of the streams. The grey dogs bounded on the heath : their howling reached afar. Fingal saw the departing hero. The soul of the king was sad. He dreaded Cairbar's gloomy thoughts, amid the feast of shells. My son raised high the spear of Cormac. An hundred bards met him with songs. Cairbar concealed with smiles, the death that was dark in his soul. The feast is spread. The shells resound. Joy brightens the face of the host. But it was like the parting beam of the sun, when he is to hide his red head in a storm !

Cairbar rises in his arms. Darkness gathers on his brow. The hundred harps cease at once. The clang of shields\* is heard. Far distant on the heath Olla raised a song of woe. My son knew the sign of death ; and rising seized his spear. " Oscar," said the dark-red Cairbar, " I behold the spear of Erin. The spear of Temora glitters in thy hand, son of woody Morven. It was the pride of an hundred

\* When a chief was determined to kill a person already in his power, it was usual to signify that his death was intended, by the sound of a shield struck with the blunt end of a spear ; at the same time that a bard at a distance raised the death-song.



kings. The death of heroes of old. Yield it, son of Ossian, yield it to car-borne Cairbar !”

“ Shall I yield,” Oscar replied, “ the gift of Erin’s injured king ; the gift of fair-haired Cormac, when Oscar scattered his foes ? I came to Cormac’s halls of joy, when Swaran fled from Fingal. Gladness rose in the face of youth. He gave the spear of Temora. Nor did he give it to the feeble ; neither to the weak of soul. The darkness of thy face is no storm to me ; nor are thine eyes the flame of death. Do I fear thy clanging shield ? Tremble I at Olla’s song ? No ; Cairbar, frighten the feeble ; Oscar is a rock !”

“ Wilt thou not yield the spear ?” replied the rising pride of Cairbar. “ Are thy words so mighty, because Fingal is near ? Fingal with aged locks, from Morven’s hundred groves ! He has fought with little men. But he must vanish before Cairbar, like a thin pillar of mist before the winds of Atha !”— “ Were he who fought with little men, near Atha’s haughty chief, Atha’s chief would yield green Erin to avoid his rage ! Speak not of the mighty, O Cairbar ! Turn thy sword on me. Our strength is equal ; but Fingal is renowned : the first of mortal men !”

Their people saw the darkening chiefs. Their crowding steps are heard around. Their eyes roll in fire. A thousand swords are half unsheathed. Red-haired Olla raised the song of battle. The trembling joy of Oscar’s soul arose ; the wonted joy of his soul when Fingal’s horn was heard. Dark as the swelling wave of ocean before the rising winds, when it bends its head near the coast, came on the host of Cairbar.

Daughter of Toscar ! why that tear ? He is not

fallen yet. Many were the deaths of his arm before my hero fell.

Behold they fall before my son, like groves in the desert; when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand. Morlath falls. Morannan dies. Conachar trembles in his blood. Cairbar shrinks before Oscar's sword. He creep in darkness behind a stone. He lifts the spear in secret; he pierces my Oscar's side. He falls forward on his shield; his knee sustains the chief. But still his spear is in his hand. See gloomy Cairbar falls. The steel pierced his forehead, and divided his red hair behind. He lay, like a shattered rock, which Cromla shakes from its shaggy side: when the green-valleyed Erin shakes its mountains, from sea to sea.

But never more shall Oscar rise! He leans on his bossy shield. His spear is in his terrible hand. Erin's sons stand distant and dark. Their shouts arise, like crowded streams. *Moi-lena* echoes wide. Fingal heard the sound. He took the spear of Selma. His steps are before us on the heath. He spoke the words of woe. "I hear the noise of war. Young Oscar is alone. Rise, sons of Morven; join the hero's sword!"

Ossian rushed along the heath. Fillan bounded over *Moi-lena*. Fingal strode in his strength. The light of his shield is terrible. The sons of Erin saw it far distant. They trembled in their souls. They knew that the wrath of the king arose; and they foresaw their death. We first arrived. We fought. Erin's chiefs withstood our rage. But when the king came, in the sound of his course, what heart of steel could stand! Erin fled over *Moi-lena*. Death pur-

sued their flight. We saw Oscar on his shield. We saw his blood around. Silence darkened every face. Each turned his back and wept. The king strove to hide his tears. His grey beard whistled in the wind. He bends his head above the chief. His words are mixed with sighs.

“Art thou fallen, O Oscar! in the midst of thy course? the heart of the aged beats over thee. He sees thy coming wars. The wars which ought to come he sees. They are cut off from thy fame! When shall joy dwell at Selma? When shall grief depart from Morven? My sons fall by degrees: Fingal is the last of his race. My fame begins to pass away. Mine age will be without friends. I shall sit a grey cloud in my hall. I shall not hear the return of a son in his sounding arms. Weep, ye heroes of Morven! never more shall Oscar rise!”

And they did weep, O Fingal! Dear was the hero to their souls. He went out to battle, and the foes vanished. He returned, in peace, amidst their joy. No father mourned his son slain in youth; no brother his brother of love. They fell without tears, for the chief of the people is low! Bran is howling at his feet; gloomy Luath is sad; for he had often led them to the chase; to the bounding roe of the desert.

When Oscar saw his friends around, his heaving breast arose. “The groans, he said of aged chiefs: the howling of my dogs; the sudden bursts of the song of grief, have melted Oscar’s soul. My soul, that never melted before. It was like the steel of my sword. Ossian, carry me to my hills. Raise the stones of my renown. Place the horn of a deer; place my sword by my side. The torrent hereafter

may raise the earth : the hunter may find the steel and say, ‘ This has been Oscar’s sword, the pride of other years ! ’ “ Fallest thou, son of my fame ? shall I never see thee, Oscar ? When others hear of their sons, shall I not hear of thee ? The moss is on thy four grey stones. The mournful wind is there. The battle shall be fought without thee. Thou shalt not pursue the dark-brown hinds. When the warrior returns from battles, and tells of other lands ; ‘ I have seen a tomb,’ he will say, ‘ by the roaring stream, the dark dwelling of a chief. He fell by car-borne Oscar, the first of mortal men.’ I, perhaps, shall hear his voice. A beam of joy will rise in my soul.”

Night would have descended in sorrow, and morning returned in the shadow of grief. Our chiefs would have stood, like cold dropping rocks on *Moi-lena*, and have forgot the war ; did not the king disperse his grief, and raise his mighty voice. The chiefs, as new-wakened from dreams, lift up their heads around.

“ How long on *Moi-lena* shall we weep ? How long pour in *Erin* our tears ? The mighty will not return. Oscar shall not rise in his strength. The valiant must fall in their day, and be no more known on their hills. Where are our fathers, O warriors ! the chiefs of the times of old ? They have set like stars that have shone. We only hear the sound of their praise. But they were renowned in their years : the terror of other times. Thus shall we pass away in the day of our fall. Then let us be renowned when we may : and leave our fame behind us, like the last beams of the sun, when he hides his red head in the west. The traveller mourns his absence, thinking of the flame of his beams. Ullin, my aged

bard! take thou the ship of the king. Carry Oscar to Selma of harps. Let the daughters of Morven weep. We must fight in Erin, for the race of fallen Cormac. The days of my years begin to fail. I feel the weakness of my arm. My fathers bend from their clouds, to receive their grey-haired son. But, before I go hence, one beam of light shall rise. My days shall end, as my years begun, in fame. My life shall be one stream of light to bards of other times!"

Ullin raised his white sails. The wind of the south came forth. He bounded on the waves towards Selma. I remained in my grief, but my words were not heard. The feast is spread on Moi-lena. An hundred heroes reared the tomb of Cairbar. No song is raised over the chief. His soul has been dark and bloody. The bards remembered the fall of Cormac! what could they say in Cairbar's praise?

Night came rolling down. The light of an hundred oaks arose. Fingal sat beneath a tree. Old Althan stood in the midst. He told the tale of fallen Cormac. Althan the son of Connacher, the friend of Car-borne Cuthullin. He dwelt with Cormac in windy Temora, when Semo's son fell at Lego's stream. The tale of Althan was mournful. The tear was in his eye, when he spoke.

"The setting sun was yellow on Dora. Grey evening began to descend. Temora's woods shook with the blast of of the inconstant wind. A cloud gathered in the west. A red star looked from behind its edge. I stood in the wood alone. I saw a ghost on the darkening air. His stride extended from hill to hill. His shield was dim on his side. It was the son of Semo. I knew the warrior's face. But he passed away in his blast; and all was dark around.

My soul was sad. I went to the hall of shells. A thousand lights arose. The hundred bards had strung the harp. Cormac stood in the midst, like the morning star, when it rejoices on the eastern hill, and its young beams are bathed in showers. Bright and silent is its progress aloft, but the cloud, that shall hide it, is near! The sword of Artho was in the hand of the king. He looked with joy on its polished studs: thrice he attempted to draw it, and thrice he failed; his yellow locks are spread on his shoulders! his cheeks of youth are red. I mourned over the beam of youth, for he was soon to set!"

"Althan!" he said with a smile, "didst thou behold my father? Heavy is the sword of the king; surely his arm was strong. O that I were like him in battle, when the rage of his wrath arose! then would I have met with Cuthullin, the car-borne son of Cantela! But years may come on, O Althan! and my arm be strong. Hast thou heard of Semo's son, the ruler of high Temora? He might have returned with his fame. He promised to return to-night. My bards wait him with songs. My feast is spread in the hall of kings."

I heard Cormac in silence. My tears began to flow. I hid them with my aged locks. The king perceived my grief. "Son of Connacher," he said, "is the son of Semo low? Why bursts the sigh in secret? Why descends the tear? Comes the car-borne Torlath? Comes the sound of red-haired Cairbar? They come; for I behold thy grief. Mossy Tura's chief is low. Shall I not rush to battle? But I cannot lift the spear. O had mine arm the strength of Cuthullin, soon would Cairbar fly; the fame of

my fathers would be renewed; and the deeds of other times."

He took his bow. The tears flow down from both his sparkling eyes. Grief saddens round. The bards bend forward from their hundred harps. The lone blast touched their trembling strings. The sound\* is sad and low. A voice is heard at a distance, as of one in grief. It was Carril of other times, who came from dark Slimofa. He told of the fall in Cuthullin. He told of his mighty deeds. The people were scattered round his tomb. Their arms lay on the ground. They had forgot the war, for he, their sire, was seen no more!"

"But who," said the soft-voiced Carril, "who come like bounding roes? Their stature is like young trees in the valley, growing in a shower! Soft and ruddy are their cheeks. Fearless souls look forth from their eyes. Who but the sons of Usnoth, chief of streamy Etha? The people rise on every side, like the strength of an half-extinguished fire, when the winds come, sudden, from the desert, on their rustling wings. Sudden glows the dark brow of the hill; the passing mariner lags on his winds. The sound of Caithbat's shield was heard. The warriors saw Cuthullin in Nathos. So rolled his sparkling eyes! his steps were such on the heath! Battles are fought at Lego. The sword of Nathos prevails. Soon shalt thou behold him in thy halls, king of Temora of groves!"

"Soon may I behold the chief!" replied the blue-eyed-king. "But my soul is sad for Cuthullin. His

\* That prophetic sound, mentioned in other poems which the harps of the bards emitted before the death of a person worthy and renowned.

voice was pleasant in mine ear. Often have we moved, on Dora, to the chase of the dark-brown hinds. His bow was unerring on the hills. He spoke of mighty men. He told of the deeds of my fathers. I felt my rising joy. But sit thou at the feast, O Caril ! I have often heard thy voice. Sing in praise of Cuthullin. Sing of Nathos of Etha !”

Day rose on Temora, with all the beams of the east. Crathin came to the hall, the son of old Gellama. “I behold,” he said, “a cloud in the desert king of Erin ! a cloud it seemed at first, but now a crowd of men ! One strides before them in his strength. His red hair flies in the wind. His shield glitters to the beam of the east. His spear is in his hand.” “Call him to the feast of Temora,” replied the brightening king. “My hall is the house of strangers, son of generous Gellama ! It is perhaps the chief of Etha, coming in all his renown. Hail, mighty stranger ! art thou of the friends of Cormac ? But, Carril, he is dark and unlovely. He draws his sword.” Is that the son of Usnoth, bard of the times of old ?”

“It is not the son of Usnoth !” said Carril. “It is Cairbar thy foe.” “Why comest thou in thy arms to Temora ? chief of the gloomy brow. Let not thy sword rise against Cormac ! whither dost thou turn thy speed ?” He passed on in darkness. He seized the hand of the king. Cormac foresaw his death ; the rage of his eyes arose. “Retire thou chief of Atha ! Nathos comes with war. Thou art bold in Cormac’s hall, for his arm is weak.” The sword entered the side of the king. He fell in the halls of his fathers. His fair hair is in the dust. His blood is smoking round.



“ Art thou fallen in thy halls ?” said Carril. “ O son of noble Artho ! The shield of Cuthullin was not near. Nor the spear of thy father. Mournful are the mountains of Erin, for the chief of the people is low. Blest be thy soul, O Cormac. Thou art darkened in thy youth.”

His words came to the ears of Cairbar. He closed us in the midst of darkness. He feared to stretch his sword to the bards, though his soul was dark.— Long we pined alone. At length the noble Cathmor came. He heard our voice from the cave. He turned the eye of his wrath on Cairbar.

“ Brother of Cathmor,” he said, “ how long wilt thou pain my soul ? Thy heart is a rock. Thy thoughts are dark and bloody. But thou art the brother of Cathmor ; and Cathmor shall shine in thy war. But my soul is not like thine ; thou feeble hand in fight. The light of my soul is stained with thy deeds. Bards will not sing of my renown ; they may say, ‘ Cathmor was brave, but he fought for gloomy Cairbar.’ They will pass over my tomb in silence. My fame shall not be heard. Cairbar ! loose the bards. They are the sons of future times. Their voice shall be heard in other years ; after the kings of Temora have failed.” We came forth at the words of the chief. We saw him in his strength.— He was like thy youth, O Fingal ! when thou first didst lift the spear. His face was like the plain of the sun, when it is bright. No darkness travelled over his brow. But he came with his thousands to aid the red haired Cairbar. Now he comes to revenge his death, O king of woody Morven.

“ Let Cathmor come,” replied the king, “ I love a foe so great. His soul is bright. His arm is

strong. His battles are full of fame. But the little soul is a vapour that hovers round the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds should meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave : it sends forth the dart of death ! Our young heroes, O warriors ! are like the renown of our fathers. They fight in youth. They fall. Their names are in song, Fingal is amid his darkening years. He must not fall, as an aged oak, across a secret stream. Near it are the steps of the hunter, as it lies beneath the wind. ‘ How has that tree fallen ? ’ he says, and whistling, strides along. Raise the song of joy, ye bards of Morven. Let our souls forget the past. The red stars look on us from clouds, and silently descend. Soon shall the grey beam of the morning rise, and show us the foes of Cormac. Fillan ! my son, take thou the spear of the king. Go to Mora’s dark-brown side. Let thine eyes travel over the heath. Observe the foes of Fingal : observe the course of generous Cathmor. I hear a distant sound like falling rocks in the desert. But strike thou thy shield, at times, that they may not come through night, and the fame of Morven cease. I begin to be alone, my son. I dread the fall of my renown.”

The voice of bards arose. The king leaned on the shield of Trenmor. Sleep descended on his eyes. His future battles arose in his dreams. The host are sleeping around. Dark-haired Fillan observes the foe. His steps are on the distant hill. We hear, at times, his clanging shield.

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BOOK II.

## ARGUMENT.

This book opens, we may suppose, about midnight, with a soliloquy of Ossian, who had retired from the rest of the army, to mourn for his son Oscar. Upon hearing the noise of Cathmor's army approaching, he went to find out his brother Fillan, who kept the watch on the hill of Mora, in the front of Fingal's army. In the conversation of the brothers, the episode of Conar, the son of Trenmor, who was the first king of Ireland, is introduced, which lays open the origin of the contests between the Cael and the Fir-bolg, the two nations who first possessed themselves of that island. Ossian kindles a fire on Mora; upon which Cathmor desisted from a designed he had formed of surprising the army of the Caledonians. He calls a counsel of his chiefs; reprimands Foldath for advising a night attack, as the Irish were so much superior in number to the enemy. The bard Fonar introduces the story of Crothar, the ancestors of the king, which throws further light on the history of Ireland, and the original pretensions of the family of Atha to the throne of that kingdom. The Irish chiefs lie down to rest, and Cathmor himself undertakes the watch. In his circuit round the army, he is met by Ossian. The interview of the two heroes is described. Cathmor obtains a promise from Ossian to order a funeral elegy to be sung over the grave of Cairbar; it being the opinion of the times, that the souls of the dead could not be happy, till their elegies were sung by a bard. Morning comes. Cathmor and Ossian part; and the latter casually meeting with Caril the son of Kinfena, sends that bard, with a funeral song, to the tomb of Cairbar.

FATHER of heroes, O Trenmor! high dweller  
eddyng winds! where the dark-red thunder

marks the troubled clouds. Open thou thy stormy halls. Let the bards of old be near. Let them draw near with songs and their half-viewless harps. No dweller of misty valley comes. No hunter unknown at his streams. It is the car-borne Oscar from the fields of war. Sudden is thy change, my son, from what thou wert on dark *Moi-lena*. The blast folds thee in its skirt, and rustles through the sky. Dost thou not behold thy father, at the stream of night? The chiefs of *Morven* sleep far distant. They have lost no son. But ye have lost a hero, chiefs of resounding *Morven*. Who could equal his strength, when battle rolled against his side, like the darkness of crowded waters. Why this cloud on *Ossian's* soul? It ought to burn in danger. *Erin* is near with her host. The king of *Selma* is alone. Alone thou shalt not be, my father, while I can lift the spear.

I rose in all my arms. I rose and listened to the wind. The shield of *Fillan* is not heard. I tremble for the son of *Fingal*. Why should the foe come by night? Why should the dark haired warrior fail?" Distant, sullen murmurs rise; like the noise of the lake of *Lego*, when its waters shrink, in the days of frost, and all its bursting ice resounds. The people of *Lara* look to heaven, and foresee the storm. My steps are forward on the heath. The spear of *Oscar* is in my hand. Red stars looked from high. I gleamed along the night.

I saw *Fillan* silent before me, bending forward from *Mora's* rock. He heard the shout of the foe. The joy of his soul arose. He heard my sounding tread, and turned his lifted spear. "Comest thou, son of

night, in peace? Or dost thou meet my wrath? The foes of Fingal are mine. Speak, or fear my steel. I stand not, in vain, the shield of Morven's race." "Never mayest thou stand in vain, son of blue-eyed Clatha. Fingal begins to be alone. Darkness gathers on the last of his days. Yet he has two sons who ought to shine in war. Who ought to be two beams of light, near the steps of his departure."

"Son of Fingal," replied the youth, "it is not long since I raised the spear. Few are the marks of my sword in war. But Fillan's soul is fire. The chiefs of Bolga\* crowd around the shield of generous Cathmor. Their gathering is on that heath. Shall my steps approach their host? I yielded to Oscar alone, in the strife of the race on Cona."

"Fillan, thou shalt not approach their host; nor fall before thy fame is known. My name is heard in song; when needful, I advance. From the skirts of night I shall view them over all their gleaming tribes. Why, Fillan, didst thou speak of Osear? Why awake my sigh? I must forget the warrior, till the storm is rolled away. Sadness ought not to dwell in danger, nor the tear in the eye of war. Our fathers forgot their fallen sons, till the noise of arms was past. Then sorrow returned to the tomb, and the song of bards arose. The memory of those who fell, quickly followed the departure of

\* The southern parts of Ireland went for some time under the name of Bolga, from the Fir-bolg or Bolgæ of Britain, who settled a colony there. 'Bolg' signifies 'a quiver,' from which proceeds 'Fir-bolg,' i. e. 'bowmen;' so called from their using bows more than any of the neighbouring nations.

war : when the tumult of battle is past, the soul, in silence, melts away, for the dead.

“ Conar was the brother of Trathal, first of mortal men. His battles were on every coast. A thousand streams rolled down the blood of his foes. His fame filled green Erin, like a pleasant gale. The nations gathered in Ullin, and they blessed the king; the king of the race of their fathers, from the land of Selma.

“ The chiefs of the south were gathered in the darkness of their pride. In the horrid cave of Muma they mixed their secret words. Thither often, they said, the spirits of their fathers came; showing their pale forms from the chinky rocks; reminding them of the honour of Bolga. ‘ Why should Conar reign,’ they said, ‘ the son of resounding Morven?’

“ They came forth, like the streams of the desert, with the roar of their hundred tribes. Conar was a rock before them : broken they rolled on every side. But often they returned, and the sons of Selma fell. The king stood among the tombs of his warriors.— He darkly bent his mournful face. His soul was rolled into itself; and he had marked the place where he was to fall : when Trathal came, in his strength, his brother from clondy Morven. Nor did he come alone. Colgar was at his side : Colgar the son of the king and of white-bosomed Solin-corma.

“ As Trenmor, clothed with meteors, descends from the halls of thunder, pouring the dark storm before him over the troubled sea : so Colgar descended to battle, and wasted the echoing field. His father rejoiced over the hero : but an arrow came ! His tomb was raised without a tear. The king was to revenge his son. He lightened forward in battle, till Bolga yielded at her streams !

“When peace returned to the land : when his blue waves bore the king to Morven; then he remembered his son, and poured the silent tear. Thrice did the bards at the cave of Furmono, call the soul of Colgar. They called him to the hills of his land. He heard them in his mist. Trathal placed his sword in the cave, that the spirit of his son might rejoice.”

“Colgar, son of Trathal,” said Fillan, “thou wert renowned in youth. But the king hath not marked my sword, bright-streaming on the field. I go forth with the crowd. I return without my fame. But the foe approaches, Ossian. I hear their murmur on the heath. The sound of their steps is like thunder, in the bosom of the ground, when the rocking hills shake their groves, and not a blast pours from the darkened sky.”

Ossian turned sudden on his spear. He raised the flame of an oak on high. I spread it large, on Mora’s wind. Cathmor stopt in his course. Gleaming he stood, like a rock, on whose sides are the wandering blasts; which seize its echoing streams, and clothe them over with ice. So stood the friend of strangers. The winds lift his heavy locks. Thou art the tallest of the race of Erin, king of streamy Atha.

“First of bards,” said Cathmor, “Fonar call the chiefs of Erin. Call red-haired Cormar; dark-browed Malthos : the sidelong-looking gloom of Maronnan. Let the pride of Foldath appear. The red rolling eye of Turlotho. Nor let Hidalla be forgot; his voice, in danger, is the sound of a shower, when it falls in the blasted vale, near Atha’s falling stream. Pleasant is its sound, on the plain, whilst broken thunder travels over the sky.”

They came, in their clanging arms. They bent for-

ward to his voice, as if a spirit of their fathers spoke from a cloud of night. Dreadful shone they to the light; like the fall of the stream of Brumo\*, when the meteor lights it, before the nightly stranger.—Shuddering he stops in his journey, and looks up for the beam of the morn.

“Why delights Foldath,” said the king, “to pour the blood of foes by night? Fails his arm in battle in the beams of day? Few are the foes before us, why should we clothe us in shades? The valiant delight to shine, in the battles of their land. Thy counsel was in vain, chief of Moma! the eyes of Morven do not sleep. They are watchful as eagles, on their mossy rocks. Let each collect, beneath his cloud, the strength of his roaring tribe. To-morrow I move, in light, to meet the foes of Bolga. Mighty was he that is low, the race of Borbar-duthul,”

“Not unmarked,” said Foldath, “were my steps before thy race. In light, I met the foes of Cairbar. The warrior praised my deeds. But his stone was raised without a tear. No bard sung over Erin’s king. Shall his foes rejoice along their mossy hills? No; they must not rejoice! He was the friend of Foldath. Our words were mixed in secret, in Moma’s silent cave; whilst thou, a boy in the field, pursuedst the thistle’s beard. With Moma’s sons I shall rush abroad, and find the foe, on his dusky hills. Fingal shall lie, without his song, the grey-haired king of Selma.”

“Dost thou think, thou feeble man,” replied Cathmor, half-enraged: “Dost thou think Fingal can

\* Brumo was a place of worship (Fing. B. 6.) in Cra-ca, which is supposed to be one of the isles of Shetland. —



fall, without his fame, in Erin? Could the bards be silent at the tomb of Selma's king; the song would burst in secret! the spirit of the king would rejoice! It is when thou shalt fall, that the bard shall forget the song. Thou art dark, chief of Moma, though thine arm is a tempest in war. Do I forget the king of Erin, in his narrow house? My soul is not lost to Cairbar, the brother of my love! I marked the bright beams of joy, which travelled over his cloudy mind, when I returned, with fame, to Atha of the streams."

Tall they removed, beneath the words of the king. Each to his own dark tribe; where, humming, they rolled on the heath, faint-glittering to the stars: like waves, in a rocky bay, before the nightly wind. Beneath an oak, lay the chief of Atha. His shield, a dusky round, hung high. Near him, against a rock, leaned the fair stranger† of Inis-huna: that beam of light, with wandering locks, from Lumon of the roes. At distance rose the voice of Fonar, with the deeds of the days of old. The song fails, at times, in Lubar's growing roar.

"Crothar," begun the bard. "first dwelt at Atha's mossy stream! A thousand oaks, from the mountains, formed his echoing hall. The gathering of the people was there, around the feast of the blue-eyed king. But who, among his chiefs, was like the stately Crothar? Warriors kindled in his presence. The young sigh of the virgins rose. In Alnecma‡ was the warrior honoured; the first of the race of Bolga.

† By 'the stranger of Inis-huna,' is meant Sul-malla.  
b. 4.

‡ Alnecma, or Alnecmacht, was the ancient name of Connaught. Ullin is still the Irish name of the province of Ulster.

He pursued the chase in Ullin : on the moss-covered top of Drumardo. From the wood looked the daughter of Cathmin, the blue-rolling eye of Con-lama. Her sigh rose in secret. She bent her head, amidst her wandering locks. The moon looked in, at night, and saw the white-tossing of her arms ; for she thought of the mighty Crothar, in the season of dreams.

“ Three days feasted Crothar with Cathmin. On the fourth they awaked the hinds. Con-lama moved to the chase, with all her lovely steps. She met Crothar in the narrow path. The bow fell at once from her hand. She turned her face away, and half-hid it with her locks. The love of Crothar rose.— He brought the white-bosomed maid to Atha. Bards raised the song in her presence. Joy dwelt round the daughter of Cathmin.

“ The pride of Turloch rose, a youth who loved the white-handed Con-lama. He came, with battle to Alnecma ; to Atha of the roes. Cormul went forth to the strife, the brother of ear-borne Crothar. He went forth, but he fell. The sigh of his people rose. Silent and tall, across the stream, came the darkening strength of Crothar : he rolled the foe from Alnecma. He returned, midst the joy of Con-lama.

“ Battle on battle comes. Blood is poured on blood. The tombs of the valiant rise. Erin’s clouds are hung round with ghosts. The chiefs of the south gathered round the echoing shield of Crothar. He came, with death to the paths of the foe. The virgins wept, by the streams of Ullin. They looked to the mist of the hill : no hunter descended from

its folds. Silence darkened in the land. Blast sighed lonely on grassy tombs.

“Descending like the eagle of heaven, with all his rustling wings, when he forsakes the blast, with joy, the son of Trenmor came : Conar, arm of death from Morven of the groves. He poured his might along green Erin. Death dimly strode behind his sword. The sons of Bolga fled from his course, as from a stream, that, bursting from the storming desert, rolls the fields together, with all their echoing woods. Crothar met him in battle ; but Alnecma’s warriors fled. The king of Atha slowly retired, in the grief of his soul. He afterwards shone in the south ; but dim as the sun of autumn ; when he visits, in his robes of mist, Lara of dark streams.—The withered grass is covered with dew ; the field, though bright, is sad.”

“Why wakes the bard before me,” said Cathmor, “the memory of those who fled? Has some ghost, from his dusky cloud, bent forward to thine ear ; to frighten Cathmor from the field with the tales of old? Dwellers of the skirts of night, your voice is but a blast to me ; which takes the grey thistle’s head, and strews its beard on streams. Within my bosom is a voice. Others hear it not. His soul forbids the king of Erin to shrink back from war.

Abashed the bard sinks back in night : retired he bends above a stream. His thoughts are on the days of Atha, when Cathmor heard his song with joy. His tears come rolling down. The winds are in his beard. Erin sleeps around. No sleep comes down on Cathmor’s eyes. Dark, in his soul, he saw the spirit of low-laid Cairbar. He saw him, without his song, rolled in a blast of night. He rose.

His steps were round the host. He struck, at times, his echoing shield. The sound reached Ossian's ear on Mora's mossy brow.

"Fillan," I said, "the foes advance. I hear the shield of war. Stand thou in the narrow path. Ossian shall mark their course. If over my fall the host should pour; then be thy buckler heard. Awake the king on his heath, lest his fame should fly away." I strode in all my rattling arms; wide-bounding over a stream that darkly-winded in the field, before the king of Atha. Green Atha's king, with lifted spear, came forward on my course. Now would we have mixed in horrid fray, like two contending ghosts, that bending forward, from two clouds, send forth the roaring winds; did not Ossian behold, on high, the helmet of Erin's kings. The eagles' wing spread above it, rustling in the breeze. A red star looked through the plumes. I stopt the lifted spear.

"The helmet of kings is before me! Who art thou, son of night? Shall Ossian's spear be renowned, when thou art lowly laid?" At once he dropt the gleaming lance. Growing before me seemed the form. He stretched his hand in night. He spoke the words of kings.

"Friend of the spirits of heroes, do I meet thee thus in shades? I have wished for thy stately steps in Atha, in the days of joy. Why should my spear now arise? The sun must behold us, Ossian, when we bend, gleaming in the strife. Future warriors shall mark the place; and shuddering, think of other years. They shall mark it, like the haunt of ghosts, pleasant and dreadful to the soul."

"Shall it then be forget," I said, "where we meet in peace? Is the remembrance of battles always

pleasant to the soul? Do not we behold, with joy, the place where our fathers feasted? But our eyes are full of tears on the fields of their war. This stone shall rise, with all its moss, and speak to other years. 'Here Cathmar and Ossian met: the warriors met in peace.' When thou, O stone, shalt fail; when Lubar's stream shall roll away; then shall the traveller come, and bend here, perhaps, in rest. When the darkened moon is rolled over his head, our shadowy forms may come, and, mixing with his dreams, remind him of his place. But why turnest thou so dark away, son of Borbar-duthal?"

"Not forgot, son of Fingal, shall we ascend these winds. Our deeds are streams of light, before the eyes of bards. But darkness is rolled on Atha: the king is low, without his soul; still there was a beam towards Cathmor, from his stormy soul; like the moon in a cloud, amidst the dark-red course of thunder."

"Son of Erin," I replied, "my wrath dwells not in his earth. My hatred flies, on eagle wing, from the foe that is low. He shall hear the song of bards. Cairbar shall rejoice in his winds."

Cathmor's swelling soul arose. He took the dagger from his side, and placed it gleaming in my hand. He placed it in my hand, with sighs, and silent strode away. Mine eyes followed his departure. He dimly gleamed, like the form of a ghoul, which meets a traveller by night, on the dark-skirted heath. His words are dark, like songs of old; with morning strides the unfinished shade away.

Who comes from Lubar's vale? from the skirts of the morning mist? The drops of heaven are on his head. His steps are in the paths of the sad. It is

Carril of other times. He comes from Tura's silent cave. I behold it dark in the rock, through the thin folds of mist. There, perhaps, Cuthullin sits, on the blast which bends its trees. Pleasant is the song of the morning from the bard of Erin.

"The waves crowd away," said Carril. "They crowd away for fear. They hear the sound of thy coming forth, O sun! Terrible is thy beauty, son of heaven, when death is descending on thy locks: when thou rollest thy vapours before thee, over the blasted host. But pleasant is thy beam to the hunter, sitting by the rock in a storm, when thou showest thyself from the parted cloud, and brightenest his dewy locks; he looks down on the streamy vale, and beholds the descent of roes. How long shalt thou rise on war, and roll, a bloody shield, through heaven? I see the death of heroes, dark wandering over thy face."

"Why wander the words of Carril?" I said, "Does the son of heaven mourn? He is unstained in his course, ever rejoicing in his fire. Roll on, thou careless light. Thou too, perhaps, must fall. Thy darkening hour may seize thee, struggling as thou rollest through thy sky. But pleasant is the voice of the bard: pleasant to Ossian's soul! It is like the shower of the morning, when it comes through the rustling vale, on which the sun looks through mist, just rising from his rocks. But this is no time, O bard, to sit down, at the strife of song. Fingal is in arms on the vale. Thou seest the flaming shield of the king. His face darkens between his locks. He beholds the wide rolling of Erin. Does not Carril behold that tomb, beside the roaring stream? Three clouds lift their grey heads

beneath a bending oak. A king is lowly laid ; Give thou his soul to the wind. He is the brother of Cathmor. Open his airy hall. Let thy song be a stream of joy to Cairbar's darkened ghost."



### BOOK III.

#### ARGUMENT.

Morning coming on, Fingal, after a speech to his people, devolves the command on Gaul, the son of Morni ; it being the custom of the times, that the king should not engage till the necessity of affairs required his superior valour and conduct. The king and Ossian retire to the rock of Cormul, which overlooked the field of battle. The bards sing the war song. The general conflict is described. Gaul the son of Morni, distinguishes himself ; kills Tur-lathon, chief of Moruth, and other chiefs of lesser name. On the other hand, Foldath, who commanded the Irish army (for Cathmor, after the example of Fingal, kept himself from battle), fights gallantly ; kills Connal, chief of Dunlora, and advances to engage Gaul himself. Gaul, in the mean time, being wounded in the hand, by a random arrow, is covered by Fillan, the son of Fingal, who performs prodigies of valour. Night comes on. The horn of Fingal recalls his army. The bards meet them with a congratulatory song, in which the praises of Gaul and Fillan are particularly celebrated. The chiefs sit down at a feast ; Fingal misses Connal. The episode of Connal and Duth-caron is introduced ; which throws further light on the ancient history of Ireland. Carril is dispatched to raise the tomb of Connal. The action of this book takes up the second day from the opening of the poem.

"Who is that at blue-streaming Lubar ? Who, by the bending hill of roes ? Tall, he leans on an

oak torn from high, by nightly winds. Who but Conhal's son, brightening in the last of his fields? His grey hair is on the breeze. He half-unsheaths the sword of Luno. His eyes are turned to Moilena, to the dark moving of foes. Dost thou hear the voice of the king? It is like the bursting of a stream in the desert, when it comes, between its echoing rocks, to the blasted field of the sun.

“Wide skirted comes down the foe. Sons of woody Selma, arise. Be ye like the rocks of our land, on whose brown sides are the rolling of streams. A beam of joy comes on my soul. I see the foe mighty before me. It is when he is feeble, that the sighs of Fingal are heard: lest death should come without renown, and darkness dwell on his tomb. Who shall lead the war, against the host of Alnecma? It is only when danger grows, that my sword shall shine. Such was the custom, heretofore, of Trenmor the ruler of winds! and thus descended to battle the blue-shielded Trathal.”

The chiefs bend toward the king. Each darkly seems to claim the war. They tell, by halves, their mighty deeds. They turn their eyes on Erin. But far before the rest the son of Morni stands. Silent he stands, for who had not heard of the battles of Gaul? They rose within his soul. His hand, in secret, seized the sword. The sword which he brought from Strumon, when the strength of Morni failed. On his spear leans Fillan of Selma, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raises his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice fails him as he speaks. My brother could not boast of battles: at once he strides away. Bent over a distant stream he stands: the tear hangs in his eye. He strikes at times, the



thistle's head, with his inverted spear. Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he beholds his son. He beholds him with bursting joy; and turns amid his crowded soul. In silence turns the king towards Mora of woods. He hides the big tear with his locks. At length his voice is heard.

"First of the sons of Morni! Thou rock that defiest the storm! Lead thou my battle, for the race of low-laid Cormac. No boy's staff is thy spear: no harmless beam of light thy sword. Son of Morni of steeds, behold the foe! Destroy! Fillan, observe the chief. He is not calm in strife: nor burns he, heedless, in battle. My son, observe the chief! He is strong as Lubar's stream, but never foams and roars. High on cloudy Mora, Fingal shall behold the war. Stand, Ossian, near thy father, by the falling stream. Raise the voice, O bards! Selma, move beneath the sound. It is my latter field. Clothe it over with light."

As the sudden rising of winds; or distant rolling of troubled seas, when some dark ghost, in wrath, heaves the billows over an isle: an isle, the seat of mist, on the deep, for many dark-brown years! So terrible is the sound of the host, wide-moving over the field. Gaul is tall before them. The streams glitter within his strides. The bards raise the song by his side. He strikes his shield between. On the skirts of the blast, the tuneful voices rise.

"On Crona," said the bards, "there burst a stream by night. It swells in its own dark course, till morning's early beam. Then comes it white from the hill, with the rocks and their hundred groves. Far be my steps from Crona. Death is tumbling there. Be ye a stream from Mora, Sons of cloudy Morven.

“Who rises, from his car, on Clutha? The hills are troubled before the king! The dark woods echo round, and lighten at his steel. See him amidst the foe, like Colgach’s sportful ghost: when he scatters the clouds, and rides the eddying winds! It is Morni of bounding steeds! Be like thy father, O Gaul.

“Selma is opened wide. Bards take the trembling harps. Ten youths bear the oak of the feast. A distant sun-beam marks the hill. The dusky waves of the blast fly over the fields of grass. Why art thou silent, O Selma? The king returns with all his fame. Did not the battle roar? yet peaceful is his brow! It roared, and Fingal overcame. Be like thy father, O Fillan.”

They move beneath the song. High wave their arms, as rushy fields, beneath autumnal winds. On Mora stand the king in arms. Mist flies round his buckler abroad; as, aloft, it hung on a bough, on Cormul’s mossy rock. In silence I stood by Fingal, and turned my eyes on Cromla’s wood: lest I should behold the host, and rush amid my swelling soul. My foot is forward on the heath. I glittered tall, in steel: like the falling stream of Tromo, which nightly winds bind over with ice. The boy sees it, on high, gleaming to the early beam: toward it he turns his ear, and wonders why it is so silent.

Nor bent over a stream is Cathmor, like a youth in a peaceful field. Wide he drew forward the war, a dark and troubled wave. But when he beheld Fingal on Mora, his generous pride arose. “Shall the chief of Atha fight, and no king in the field? Foldath, lead my people forth. Thou art a beam of fire.”

Forth issues Foldath of Moma, like a cloud, the

robe of ghosts. He drew his sword, a flame, from his side. He bade the battle move. The tribes, like ridgy waves, dark pour their strength around. Haughty is his stride before them. His red eye rolls in wrath. He calls Cormul chief of Dun-ratho; and his words were heard.

“Cormul, thou beholdest that path. It winds green behind the foe. Place thy people there; lest Selma should escape from my sword. Bards of green-valleyed Erin, let no voice of yours arise. The sons of Morven must fall without song. They are the foes of Cairbar. Hereafter shall the traveller meet their dark, thick mist on Lena, where it wanders with their ghosts, beside the reedy lake. Never shall they rise, without song, to the dwelling of winds.”

Cormul darkened, as he went. Behind him rushed his tribe. They sunk beyond the rock. Gaul spoke to Fillan of Selma; as his eye pursued the course of the dark-eyed chief of Dun-ratho. “Thou beholdest the steps of Cormul. Let thine arm be strong. When he is low, son of Fingal, remember Gaul in war. Here I fall forward into battle, amid the ridge of shields.”

The sign of death ascends; the dreadful sound of Morni's shield. Gaul pours his voice between. Fingal rises on Mora. He saw them, from wing to wing, bending at once in strife. Gleaming on his own dark hill, stood Cathmor of streamy Atha. The kings were like two spirits of heaven, standing each on his gloomy cloud: when they pour abroad the winds, and lift the roaring seas. The blue tumbling of waves is before them, marked with the paths of

whales. They themselves are calm and bright.—  
The gale lifts slowly their locks of mist.

What beam of light hangs high in air? What beam  
but Morni's dreadful sword? Death is strewed on  
thy paths, O Gaul! Thou foldest them together in  
thy rage. Like a young oak falls Tur-lathon, with  
his branches round him. His high-bosomed spouse  
stretches her white arms, in dreams, to the return-  
ing chief, as she sleeps by gurgling Moruth, in her  
disordered locks. It is his ghost, Oichoma. The  
chief is lowly laid. Hearken not to the winds for  
Tur-lathon's echoing shield. It is pierced, by his  
streams. Its sound is passed away.

Not peaceful is the hand of Foldath. He winds  
his course in blood. Connal met him in fight.—  
They mixed their clanging steel. Why should mine  
eyes behold them? Connal, thy locks are grey.  
Thou wert the friend of strangers, at the moss-  
covered rock of Dun-lora. When the skies were rolled  
together, then thy feast was spread. The stranger  
heard the winds without; and rejoiced at thy burn-  
ing oak. Why, son of Duth-caron, art thou laid in  
blood? The blasted tree bends above thee. Thy  
shield lies broken near. Thy blood mixes with the  
stream! thou breaker of the shields!

Ossian took the spear, in his wrath. But Gaul  
rushed forward on Foldath. The feeble pass by  
his side: his rage is turned on Moma's chief. Now  
they had raised their deathful spears: unseen an  
arrow came. It pierced the hand of Gaul. His  
steel fell sounding to earth. Young Fillan came,  
with Cormul's shield. He stretched it large before  
the chief. Foldath sent his shouts abroad, and

kindled all the field ; as a blast that lifts the wide-winged flame over Lumon's echoing groves.

" Son of blue-eyed Clatho," said Gaul, " O Fillan ! thou art a beam from heaven ; that, coming on the troubled deep, binds up the tempest's wing. Cormul is fallen before thee. Early art thou in the fame of thy fathers. Rush not too far, my hero. I cannot lift the spear to aid. I stand harmless in battle ; but my voice shall be poured abroad. The sons of Selma shall hear and remember my former deeds."

His terrible voice rose on the wind. The host bends forward in fight. Often had they heard him, at Strumon, when he called them to the chase of the hinds. He stands tall, amid the war, as an oak in the skirts of a storm, which now is clothed on high, in mist ; then shows its broad, waving head. The musing hunter lifts his eye, from his own rushy field.

My soul pursues thee, O Fillan ! through the path of thy fame. Thou rollest the foe before thee. Now Foldath, perhaps, may fly ; but night comes down with its clouds. Cathmor's horn is heard on high. The sons of Selma hear the voice of Fingal, from Mora's gathered mist. The bards pour their song, like dew, on the returning war.

" Who comes from Strumon," they said, " amid her wandering locks ? She is mournful in her steps, and lifts her blue eyes towards Erin. Why art thou sad, Evir-choma ? Who is like thy chief in renown ? He descended dreadful to battle ; he returns, like a light from a cloud. He raised the sword in wrath : they shrunk before the blue-shielded Gaul."

" Joy, like the rustling gale, comes on the soul of the king. He remembers the battles of old ; the days wherein his fathers fought. The days of old return on.

Fingal's mind as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices, from his cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, as it shakes its lonely head on the heath ; so joyful is the king over Fillan!

“ As the rolling of thunder on hills, when Lara's fields are still and dark, such are the steps of Selma! pleasant and dreadful to the ear. They return with their sound, like eagles to their dark-brown rock, after the prey is torn on the field, the dun sons of the bounding hind. Your fathers rejoice from their clouds, sons of streamy Selma!”

Such was the nightly voice of bards, on Mora of the hinds. A flame rose, from an hundred oaks, which winds had torn from Cormul's steep. The feast is spread in the midst : round sat the gleaming chiefs. Fingal is there in his strength. The eagle-wing of his helmet sounds. The rustling blasts of the west, unequal rush through night. Long looks the king in silence round : at length his words are heard.

“ My soul feels a want in our joy. I behold a breach among my friends. The head of one tree is low. The squally wind pours in on Selma. Where is the chief of Dun-lora? Ought Connal to be forgot at the feast? When did he forget the stranger, in the midst of his echoing hall? Ye are silent in my presence! Connal is then no more. Joy meet thee, O warrior! like a stream of light. Swift be thy course to thy fathers, along the roaring winds! Ossian, thy soul is fire : kindle the memory of the king. Awake the battles of Connal, when first he shone in war. The locks of Connal were grey. His days of youth were mixed with mine. In one day Duth-caron first strung our bows, against the roes of Dun-lora.”

“ Many,” I said, “ are our paths to battle in green

valleyed Erin. Often did our sails arise, over the blue tumbling waves ; when we came, in other days, to aid the race of Conar. The strife roared once in Alnecma, at the foam-covered streams of Duth-ula. With Cormac descended to battle Duth-caron, from cloudy Selma. Nor descended Duth-caron alone ; his son was by his side, the long haired youth of Connal lifting the first of his spears. Thou didst command them, O Fingal ! to aid the king of Erin.

“ Like the bursting strength of ocean, the sons of Boiga rushed to war. Colc-ulla was before them, the chief of blue-streaming Atha. The battle was mixed on the plain. Cormac shone in his own strife, bright as the forms of his fathers. But, far before the rest, Duth-caron hewed down the foe. Nor slept the arm of Connal by his father’s side. Colc-ulla prevailed on the plain : like scattered mist fled the people of Cormac.

“ Then rose the sword of Duth-caron, and the steel of broad-shielded Connal. They shaded their flying friends, like two rocks with their heads of pine. Night came down on Duth-ula : silent strode the chiefs over the field. A mountain stream roared across the path, nor could Duth-caron bound over its course. ‘ Why stands my father ? ’ said Connal, ‘ I hear the rushing foe.’

‘ Fly, Connal,’ he said, ‘ Thy father’s strength begins to fail. I come wounded from battle. Here let me rest in night.’ ‘ But thou shalt not remain alone,’ said Connal’s bursting sigh. ‘ My shield is an eagle’s wing to cover the king of Dun-lora.’ He bends dark above his father. The mighty Duth-caron dies.

“ Day rose and night returned. No lonely bard

appeared, deep musing on the heath: and could Connal leave the tomb of his father, till he should receive his fame? He bent the bow against the roes of Duth-ula. He spread the lonely feast. Seven nights he laid his head on the tomb, and saw his father in his dreams. He saw him rolled, dark, in a blast, like the vapour of reedy Lego. At length the steps of Colgand came, the bard of high Temora. Duth-caron received his fame, and brightened, as he rose on the wind."

"Pleasant to the ear," said Fingal, "is the praise of the kings of men; when their bows are strong in battle; when they soften at the sight of the sad. Thus let my name be renowned, when the bards shall lighten my rising soul. Carril, son of Kinfena! take the bards, and raise a tomb. To-night let Connal dwell within his narrow house. Let not the soul of the valiant wander on the winds. Faint glimmers the moon on Moi-lena, through the broad-headed groves of the hill. Raise stones, beneath its beam, to all the fallen in war. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were strong in fight. They were my rock in danger; the mountain from which I spread my eagle wings. Thence am I renowned. Carril, forget not the low!"

Loud, at once, from the hundred bards, rose the song of the tomb. Carril strode before them; they are the murmur of streams behind his steps. Silence dwells in the vales of Moi-lena, where each, with its own dark rill, is winding between the hills. I heard the voice of the bards, lessening, as they moved along. I leaned forward from my shield; and felt the kindling of my soul. Half-formed, the words of my song burst forth upon the wind. So



hears a tree, on the vale, the voice of spring around. It pours its green leaves to the sun. It shakes its lonely head. The hum of the mountain bee is near it; the hunter sees it with joy, from the blasted heath.

Young Fillan at a distance stood. His helmet lay glittering on the ground. His dark hair is loose to the blast. A beam of light is Clatho's son! He heard the words of the king with joy. He leaned forward on his spear.

"My son," said car-borne Fingal, "I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. The fame of our fathers, I said, bursts from its gathering cloud. Thou art brave, son of Clatho, but heedlong in the strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind. They are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of the old. The memory of the past returns, my deeds in other years; when first I descended from ocean on the green-valleyed isle."

We bend towards the voice of the king. The moon looks abroad from her cloud. The grey-skirted mist is near; the dwelling of the ghosts!

## BOOK IV.

## ARGUMENT.

The second night continues. Fingal relates, at the feast, his own expedition into Ireland, and his marriage with Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, king of that island. The Irish chiefs convene in the presence of Cathmor. The situation of the king described. The story of Sul-malla, the daughter of Connor, king of Inis-huna, who, in the disguise of a young warrior, had followed Cathmor to the war. The sullen behaviour of Foidath, who had commanded in the battle of the preceding day, renews the difference between him and Malthos; but Cathmor interposing, ends it. The chiefs feast, and hear the song of Fonar the bard. Cathmor returns to rest, at a distance from the army. The ghost of his brother Cairbar appears to him in a dream; and obscurely foretells the issue of the war. The soliloquy of the king. He discovers Sul-malla. Morning comes. Her soliloquy closes the book.

“BENEATH an oak,” said the king, “I sat on Selma’s streamy rock, when Connal rose from the sea, with the broken spear of Duth-caron. Far distant stood the youth. He turned away his eyes. He remembered the steps of his father, on his own green hills. I darkened in my place. Dusky thoughts flew over my soul. The king of Erin rose before me. I half-unsheathed the sword. Slowly approached the chiefs. They lifted up their silent eyes. Like a ridge of clouds, they wait for the bursting forth of my voice. My voice was, to them, a wind from heaven, to roll the mist away.

“ I bade my white sails to rise, before the roar of Cona's wind. Three hundred youths looked, from their waves, on Fingal's bossy shield. High on the mast it hung, and marked the dark-blue sea. But when night came down, I struck, at times, the warning boss; I struck, and looked on high, for fiery-haired Ul-erin\*. Nor absent was the star of heaven. It travelled red between the clouds. I pursued the lovely beam, on the faint-gleaming deep. With morning, Erin rose in mist. We came into the bay of Moi-lena, where its blue waters tumbled, in the bosom of echoing woods. Here Cormac, in his secret hall, avoids the strength of Colc-ulla. Nor he alone avoids the foe. The blue eye of Ros-crana is there: Ros-crana, white-handed maid, the daughter of a king.

“ Grey, on his pointless spear, came forth the aged steps of Cormac. He smiled, from his waving locks; but grief was in his soul. He saw us few before him, and his sigh arose. ‘ I see the arms of Trenmor,’ he said; ‘ and these are the steps of the king. Fingal, thou art a beam of light to Cormac's darkened soul. Early is thy fame, my son: but strong are the foes of Erin. They are like the roar of streams in the land, son of car-borne Comhal.’ ‘ Yet they may be rolled away,’ I said in my rising soul. ‘ We are not of the race of the feeble, king of blue-shielded hosts! Why should fear come amongst us, like a ghost of night? The soul of the valiant grows, when foes increase in the field. Roll no darkness, king of Erin, on the young in war.’

“ The bursting tears of the king came down. He

\* Ul-erin, ‘ the guide to Ireland,’ a star known by that name in the days of Fingal,

seized my hand in silence. 'Race of the daring Trenmor,' at length he said, 'I roll no cloud before thee. Thou burnest in the fire of thy fathers. I behold thy fame. It marks thy course in battle, like a stream of light. But wait the coming of Cairbar: my son must join thy sword. He calls the sons of Erin, from all their distant streams.'

"We came to the hall of the king, where it rose in the midst of rocks, on whose dark sides were the marks of streams of old. Broad oaks bend around with their moss. The thick birch is waving near. Half-hid in her shady grove, Ros-crana raises the song. Her white hands move on the harp. I beheld her blue-rolling eyes. She was like a spirit of heaven half-folded in the skirt of a cloud!

"Three days we feasted at Moi-lena. She rises bright in my troubled soul. Cormac beheld me dark. He gave the white bosomed maid. She comes with bending eye, and the wandering of her heavy locks. She came! straight the battle roared. Colc-ulla appeared: I took my spear. My sword rose, with my people, against the ridgy foe. Alnecma fled. Colc-ulla fell. Fingal returned with fame.

"Renowned is he, O Fillan, who fights in the strength of his host. The bard pursues his steps, through the land of the foe. But he who fights alone, few are his deeds to other times! He shines to-day, a mighty light. To-morrow, he is low. One song contains his fame. His name is on one dark field. He is forgot; but where his tomb sends forth the tufted grass."

"Such are the words of Fingal, on Mora of the roes. Three bards from the rock of Cormal, pour down the pleasing sound. Sleep descends, in the sound,

on the broad-skirted host. Carril returned, with the bards, from the tomb of Dun-lora's chief. The voice of morning shall not come to the dusky bed of Duth-caron. No more shalt thou hear the tread of roes around thy narrow house !

As roll the troubled clouds, around a meteor of night, when they brighten their sides, with its light, along the heaving sea : so gathers Erin around the gleaming form of Cathmor. He, tall in the midst, careless lifts, at times, his spear : as swells or falls the sound of Fonar's distant harp. Near him leaned, against a rock, Sul-malla of blue eyes, the white-bosomed daughter of Conmor, king of Inishuna. To his aid came blue-shielded Cathmor, and rolled his foes away. Sul-malla beheld him stately in the hall of feasts. Nor careless rolled the eyes of Cathmor on the long-haired maid.

The third day arose, when Fithil came, from Erin of the streams. He told of the lifting up of the shield in Selma ; he told of the danger of Cairbar. Cathmor raised the sail at Cluba ; but the winds were in other lands. Three days he remained on the coast, and turned his eyes on Conmor's halls. He remembered the daughter of strangers, and his sigh arose. Now when the winds awaked the wave, from the hill came a youth in arms, to lift the sword with Cathmor, in his echoing fields. It was the white-armed Sul-malla. Secret she dwelt beneath her helmet. Her steps were in the path of the king : on him her blue eyes rolled with joy, when he lay by his rolling streams ! But Cathmor thought, that, on Lumon, she still pursued the roes. He thought, that fair on a rock she stretched her white hand to the wind, to feel its course from Erin, the

green dwelling of her love. He had promised to return with his white-bosomed sails. The maid is near thee, O Cathmor, leaning on her rock.

The tall forms of the chiefs stand around ; all but dark-browed Foldath. He leaned against a distant tree, rolled into his haughty soul. His bushy hair whistles in the wind. At times, bursts the hum of a song. He struck the tree, at length, in wrath ; and rushed before the king ! Calm and stately, to the beam of the oak, arose the form of young Hidalla. His hair falls round his blushing cheek, in wreaths of waving light. Soft was his voice in Clonra, in the valley of his fathers. Soft was his voice when he touched the harp, in the hall, near his roaring streams.

“ King of Erin,” said Hidalla, “ now is the time to feast. Bid the voice of bards arise. Bid them roll the night away. The soul returns from song, more terrible to war. Darkness settles on Erin. From hill to hill bend the skirted clouds. Far and grey, on the heath, the dreadful strides of ghosts are seen : the ghosts of those who fell bend forward to their song. Bid, O Cathmor, the harps to rise, to brighten the dead, on their wandering blasts.”

“ Be all the dead forgot,” said Foldath’s bursting wrath. “ Did not I fail in the field ? Shall I then hear the song ? Yet was not my course harmless in war. Blood was a stream around my steps. But the feeble were behind me. The foe has escaped from my sword. In Clonra’s vale touch thou the harp. Let Dura answer to the voice of Hidalla. Let some maid look, from the wood, on thy long yellow locks. Fly from Lubar’s echoing plain.— This is the field of heroes !”

“King of Erin,” Malthos said, “it is thine to lead in war. Thou art a fire to our eyes, on the dark-brown field. Like a blast thou hast past over hosts. Thou hast laid them low in blood. But who has heard thy words returning from the field? The wrathful delight in death : their remembrance rests on the wounds of their spear. Strife is folded in their thoughts; their words are ever heard. Thy course, chief of Moma, was like a troubled stream. The dead were rolled on thy path. but others also lift the spear. We were not feeble behind thee ; but the foe was strong.”

Cathmor beheld the rising rage, and bending forward of either chief: for, half-unsheathed, they held their swords, and rolled their silent eyes. Now would they have mixed in horrid fray, had not the wrath of Cathmor burned. He drew his sword : it gleamed through night to the high flaming oak. “Sons of pride,” said the king, “allay your swelling souls. Retire in night. Why should my rage arise? Should I contend with both in arms? It is no time for strife. Retire, ye clouds, at my feast. Awake my soul no more.”

They sunk from the king on either side ; like two columns of morning mist, when the sun rises between them on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side ; each towards its reedy pool.

Silent sat the chiefs at the feast. They look, at times, on Atha's king, where he strode, on his rock, amid his settling soul. The host lie along the field. Sleep descends on Moi-lena. The voice of Fonar ascends alone, beneath his distant tree. It ascends in the praise of Cathmor, son of Larthon of Lumon. But Cathmor did not hear his praise. He lay at

the roar of a stream. The rustling breeze of night flew over his whistling locks.

His brother came to his dreams, half-seen from his low-hung cloud. Joy rose darkly in his face. He had heard the song of Carril\*. A blast sustained his dark-skirted cloud : which he seized in the bosom of night, as he rose, with his fame, towards his airy hall. Half-mixed with the noise of the stream, he poured his feeble words.

“ Joy met the soul of Cathmor. His voice was heard on Moi-lena. The bard gave his song to Cairbar. He travels on the wind. My form is in my father’s hall, like the gliding of a terrible light, which darts across the desert, in a stormy night. No bard shall be wanting at thy tomb, when thou art lowly laid. The sons of song love the valiant. Cathmor, thy name is a pleasant gale. The mournful sounds arise. On Lubar’s field there is a voice. Louder still, ye shadowy ghosts ! The dead were full of fame. Shrilly swells the feeble sound. The rougher blast alone is heard. Ah ! soon is Cathmor low !” Rolled into himself he flew, wide on the bosom of winds. The old oak felt his departure, and shook its whistling head. Cathmor starts from rest. He takes his deathful spear. He lifts his eyes around. He sees but dark-skirted night.

“ It was the voice of the king,” he said. “ But now his form his gone. Unmarked is your path in the air, ye children of the night. Often, like a reflected beam, are ye seen in the desert wild ; but ye retire in your blasts, before our steps approach. Go then, ye feeble race : knowledge with you there is none. Your joys are weak, and like the dreams

\* The funeral elegy at the tomb of Cairbar.



of our rest, or the light-winged thought, that flies across the soul. Shall Cathmor soon be low? Darkly laid in his narrow house? Where no morning comes, with her half-opened eyes? Away, thou shade! to fight is mine:—all further thought away! I rush forth, on eagle's wings, to seize my beam of fame. In the lonely vale of streams, abides the narrow soul. Years roll on, seasons return, but he is still unknown. In a blast comes cloudy death, and lays his grey head low. His ghost is folded in the vapour of the fenny field. Its course is never on hills, nor mossy vales of wind. So shall not Cathmor depart. No boy in the field was he, who only marks the bed of roes, upon the echoing hills. My issuing forth was with kings. My joy in dreadful plains; where broken hosts are rolled away, like seas before the wind."

So spoke the king of Alnecma, brightening in his rising soul. Valour, like a pleasant flame, is gleaming within his breast. Stately is his stride on the heath. The beam of east is poured around. He saw his grey host on the field, wide-spreading their ridges in light. He rejoiced like a spirit of heaven, whose steps come forth on the seas, when he beholds them peaceful around, and all the winds are laid. But soon he awakes the waves, and rolls them large to some echoing shore.

On the rushy bank of a stream, slept the daughter of Inis-huna. The helmet had fallen from her head. Her dreams were in the lands of her fathers. There morning is on the field. Grey streams leap down from the rocks. The breezes in shadowy waves fly over the rushy fields. There is the sound that prepares for the chase. There the moving of warriors

from the hall. But tall above the rest is seen the hero of streamy Atha. He bends his eye of love on Sul-malla, from his stately steps. She turns, with pride, her face away, and careless bends the bow.

Such were the dreams of the maid, when Cathmor of Atha came. He saw her fair face before him, in the midst of her wandering locks. He knew the maid of Lumon. What should Cathmor do? His sighs arise. His tears come down. But straight he turns away. "This is no time, king of Atha, to awake thy secret soul. The battle is rolled before thee, like a troubled stream."

He struck that warning boss\*, wherein dwelt the voice of war. Erin rose around him, like the sound of eagle-wing. Sul-malla started from sleep, in her disordered locks. She seized the helmet from earth. She trembled in her place. "Why should they know in Erin of the daughter of Inis-huna?" She remembered the race of kings. The pride of her soul arose! Her steps are behind a rock, by the blue-winding stream of a vale: where dwelt the dark-brown hind ere yet the war arose. Thither came the voice of Cathmor, at times, to Sul-malla's ear. Her soul is darkly sad. She pours her words on winds.

"The dreams of Inis-huna departed. They are dispersed from my soul. I hear not the chase in my land. I am concealed in the skirt of war. I look forth from my cloud. No beam appears to light my

\* In order to understand this passage, it is necessary to look to the description of Cathmor's shield in the 7th book. The shield had seven principal bosses, the sound of each of which, when struck with a spear, conveyed a particular order from the king to his tribes. The sound of one of them was the signal for the army to assemble.

path. I behold my warrior low; for the broad-shielded king is near, he that overcomes in danger, Fingal from Selma of spears! Spirit of departed Conmor! are thy steps on the bosom of winds? Comest thou at times to other lands, father of sad Sul-malla? Thou dost come! I have heard thy voice at night; while yet I rose on the wave to Erin of the streams. The ghosts of fathers, they say, call away the souls of their race, while they behold them lonely in the midst of woe. Call me, my father, away! When Cathmor is low on earth; then shall Sul-malla be lonely in the midst of woe!"

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## BOOK V.

### ARGUMENT.

The poet, after a short address to the harp of Cona, describes the arrangement of both armies on either side of the river Lubar. Fingal gives the command to Fillan; but at the same time, orders Gaul, the son of Morni, who had been wounded in the hand in the preceding battle, to assist him with his counsel. The army of the Fir-bolg is commanded by Foldath. The general onset is described. The great actions of Fillan. He kills Rothmar and Culmin. But when Fillan conquers in one wing, Foldath presses hard on the other. He wounds Dermid, the son of Duthno, and puts the whole wing to flight. Dermid deliberates with himself, and at last resolves to put a stop to the progress of Foldath, by engaging him in single combat. When the two chiefs were approaching towards one another, Fillan came suddenly to the relief of Dermid; engaged Foldath, and killed him. The behaviour of Malthos towards the fallen Foldath. Fillan puts the whole army of the Fir-bolg to flight. The book closes with an address to Clatho, the mother of that hero.

THOU dweller between the shields, that hang, on high, in Ossian's hall ! Descend from thy place, O harp, and let me hear thy voice ! Son of Alpin, strike the string. Thou must awake the soul of the bard. The murmur of Lora's stream has rolled the tale away. I stand in the cloud of years. Few are its openings toward the past ; and when the vision comes, it is but dim and dark. I hear thee, harp of Selma ! my soul returns, like a breeze, which the sun brings back to the vale, where dwelt the lazy mist !

Lubar is bright before me in the windings of its vale. On either side, on their hills, rise the tall forms of the kings. Their people are poured around them, bending forward to their words : as if their fathers spoke, descending from the winds. But they themselves are like two rocks in the midst ; each with its dark head of pines, when they are seen in the desert, above low-sailing mist. High on their face are streams, which spread their foam on blasts of wind !

Beneath the voice of Cathmor pours Erin, like the sound of flame. Wide they come down to Lubar. Before them is the stride of Foldath. But Cathmor retires to his hill, beneath his bending oak. The tumbling of a stream is near the king. He lifts, at times, his gleaming spear. It is a flame to his people in the midst of war. Near him stands the daughter of Conmor, leaning on a rock. She did not rejoice at the strife. Her soul delighted not in blood. A valley spreads green behind the hill, with its three blue streams. The sun is there in silence. The dun mountain-rocks come down. On these are turned the eyes of Sul-malla in her thoughtful mood.

Fingal beholds Cathmor, on high, the son of Bor-

bar-duthil ! he beholds the deep-rolling of Erin, on the darkened plain. He strikes that warning boss, which bids the people to obey, when he sends his chief before them, to the field of renown. Wide rise their spears to the sun. Their echoing shields reply around. Fear, like a vapour, winds not among the host: for he, the king, is near, the strength of streamy Selma. Gladness brightens the hero. We hear his words with joy.

“ Like the coming forth of winds, is the sound of Selma’s sons ! They are mountain waters, determined in their course. Hence is Fingal renowned. Hence is his name in other lands. He was not a lonely beam in danger ; for your steps were always near ! But never was Fingal a dreadful form in your presence, darkened into wrath. My voice was no thunder to your ears. Mine eyes sent forth no death. When the haughty appeared, I beheld them not.— They were forgot at my feasts. Like mist they melted away. A young beam is before you. Few are his paths to war. They are few, but he is valiant. Defend my dark-haired son. Bring Fillan back with joy. Hereafter he may stand alone. His form is like his fathers. His soul is a flame of their fire. Son of car-borne Morni, move behind the youth. Let thy voice reach his ear, from the skirts of war. Not unobserved rolls battle before thee, breaker of the shields.”

The king strode, at once, away to Cormul’s lofty rock. Intermitting darts the light from his shield, as slow the king of heroes moves. Sidelong rolls his eyes o’er the heath, as forming advance the lines. Graceful fly his half grey locks round his kingly features, now lightened with dreadful joy. Wholly

mighty is the chief! Behind him dark and slow I moved. Straight came forward the strength of Gaul. His shield hung loose on its thong. He spoke, in haste, to Ossian. "Bind, son of Fingal, this shield! Bind it high to the side of Gaul. The foe may behold it, and think I lift the spear. If I should fall, let my tomb be hid in the field: for fall I must without fame. Mine arm cannot lift the steel. Let not Evir-choma hear it, to blush between her locks.—Fillan, the mighty behold us! Let us not forget the strife. Why should they come from their hills, to aid our flying field?"

He strode onward, with the sound of his shield. My voice pursued him as he went. "Can the son of Morni fall, without his fame in Erin? But the deeds of the mighty are forgot by themselves. They rush careless over the fields of renown: Their words are never heard!" I rejoiced over the steps of the chief. I strode to the rock of the king, where he sat, in his wandering locks, amid the mountain-wind!

In two dark ridges bend the hosts toward each other, at Lubar. Here Foldath rises a pillar of darkness: there brightens the youth of Fillan. Each, with his spear in the stream, sent forth the voice of war. Gaul struck the shield of Selma. At once they plunge in battle. Steel pours its gleam on steel; like the fall of streams shone the field, when they mix their foam together, from two dark-browed rocks. Behold he comes, the son of fame. He lays the people low. Deaths sit on blasts around him. Warriors strew thy paths, O Fillan!

Rothmar, the shield of warriors, stood between two chinky rocks. Two oaks, which winds had bent from high, spread their branches on either side. He

rolls his darkening eyes on Fillan, and, silent, shades his friends. Fingal saw the approaching fight. The hero's soul arose. But as the stone of Loda\* falls, shook, at once, from rocking Druman-ard, when spirits leave the earth in their wrath; so fell blue-shielded Rothmar.

Near are the steps of Culmin. The youth came, bursting into tears. Wrathful he cut the wind, ere yet he mixed his strokes with Fillan. He had first bent the bow with Rothmar, at the rock of his own blue streams. There they had marked the place of the roe, as the sun-beam flew over the fern. Why, son of Cul-allin, why Culmin, dost thou rush on that beam of light †? It is a fire that consumes. Son of Cul-allin, retire. Your fathers were not equal, in the glittering strife of the field. The mother of Culmin remains in the hall. She looks forth on blue rolling Strutha. A whirlwind rises, on the stream, dark eddying round the ghost of her son. His dogs ‡ are howling in their place. His shield is bloody in the hall. "Art thou fallen, my fair-haired son, in Erin's dismal war?"

As a roe, pierced in secret, lies panting, by her wonted streams; the hunter surveys her feet of wind! He remembers her stately bounding before. So lay the son of Cul-allin beneath the eye of Fillan. His hair is rolled in a little stream. His blood wan-

\* By 'the stone of Loda' is meant a place of worship among the Scandinavians.

† The poet metaphorically calls Fillan a beam of light.

‡ Dogs were thought to be sensible of the death of their master, let it happen at ever so great a distance. It was also the opinion of the times, that the arms which warriors left at home became bloody, when they themselves fell in battle.

ders on his shield. Still his hand holds the sword, that failed him in the midst of danger. "Thou art fallen," said Fillan, "ere yet thy fame was heard. Thy father sent thee to war. He expects to hear of thy deeds. He is grey, perhaps at his streams.—His eyes are toward *Moi-lena*. But thou shalt not return with the spoil of the fallen foe!"

Fillan pours the flight of Erin before him, over the resounding heath. But man on man, fell Morven before the dark-red rage of Foldath; for, far on the field, he poured the roar of half his tribes. Dermid stands before him in wrath. The sons of Selma gathered around. But his shield is cleft by Foldath. His people fly over the heath.

Then said the foe, in his pride, "They have fled. My fame begins! Go, Malthos; go bid Cathmor guard the dark-rolling of ocean, that Fingal may not escape from my sword. He must lie on earth. Beside some fen shall his tomb be seen. It shall rise without a song. His ghost shall hover in mist, over the reedy pool."

Malthos heard, with darkening doubt. He rolled his silent eyes. He knew the pride of Foldath. He looked up to Fingal on his hills: then darkly turning, in doubtful mood, he plunged his sword in war.

In Clono's narrow vale, where bend two trees, above the stream, dark, in his grief, stood Duthno's silent son. The blood pours from the side of Dermid. His shield is broken near. His spear leans against a stone. Why Dermid, why so sad? "I hear the roar of battle. My people are alone. My steps are slow on the heath, and no shield is mine. Shall he then prevail? It is then after Dermid is low! I will call thee forth, O Foldath! and meet thee yet in fight."



He took his spear, with dreadful joy. The son of Morni came. "Stay, son of Duthno, stay thy speed. Thy steps are marked with blood. No bossy shield is thine. Why shouldst thou fall unarmed?"—"Son of Morni! Give thou thy shield. It has often rolled back the war. I shall stop the chief in his course. Son of Morni! behold that stone! It lifts its grey head through grass. There dwells a chief of the race of Dermid. Place me there in night."

He slowly rose against the hill. He saw the troubled field: the gleaming ridges of battle, disjoined and broken round. As distant fires, on heath by night, now seem as lost in smoke; now rearing their red streams on the hill, as blow or cease the winds: so met the intermitting war the eye of broad-shielded Dermid. Through the host are the strides of Foldath, like some dark ship on wintry waves, when she issues from between two isles, to sport on resounding ocean.

Dermid, with rage, beholds his course. He strives to rush along. But he fails amid his steps; and the big tear comes down. He sounds his father's horn. He thrice strikes his bossy shield. He calls thrice the name of Foldath, from his roaring tribes. Foldath with joy, beholds the chief. He lifts aloft his bloody spear. As a rock is marked with streams, that fell troubled down its side in a storm; so streaked with wandering blood, is the dark chief of Moma. The host, on either side, withdraw from the contending of kings. They raise, at once, their gleaming points. Rushing comes Fillan of Selma. Three paces back Foldath withdraws, dazzled with that beam of light, which came, as issuing from a cloud, to save the wounded chief. Growing in his pride he stands. He calls forth all his steel.

As meet two broad-winged eagles, in their sounding strife, in winds : so rush the two chiefs, on Moilena, into gloomy fight. By turns are the steps of the kings† forward on their rocks above : for now the dusky war seems to descend on their swords.— Cathmor feels the joy of warriors, on his mossy hill : their joy in secret, when dangers rise to match their souls. His eye is not turned on Lubar, but on Selma's dreadful king. He beholds him, on Mora, rising in his arms.

Foldath falls on his shield. The spear of Fillan pierced the king. Nor looks the youth on the fallen, but onward rolls the war. The hundred voices of death arise. “ Stay, son of Fingal, stay thy speed. Beholdest thou not that gleaming form, a dreadful sign of death ? Awaken not the king of Erin. Return, son of blue-eyed Clatho.”

Malthos beholds Foldath low. He darkly stands above the chief. Hatred is rolled from his soul. He seems a rock in a desert, on whose dark side are the trickling of waters ; when the slow-sailing mist has left it, and all its trees are blasted with winds. He spoke to the dying hero, about the narrow house. “ Whether shall thy grey stone rise in Ullin, or in Moma's woody land ; where the sun looks, in secret, on the blue streams of Dalrutho ? There are the steps of thy daughter, blue-eyed Dardu-lena !”

“ Rememberest thou her,” said Foldath, “ because no son is mine ; no youth to roll the battle before him, in revenge of me ? Malthos, I am revenged. I was not peaceful in the field. Raise the tombs of those I have slain, around my narrow house. Often shall I forsake the blast, to rejoice about their

† Fingal and Cathmor.

graves : when I behold them spread around, with their long whistling grass."

His soul rushed to the vale of Moma, to Dardulena's dreamis, where she slept, by Dalrutho's stream, returning from the chase of the hinds. 'Her bow is near the maid, unstrung. The breezes fold her long hair on her breasts. Clothed in the beauty of youth, the love of heroes lay. Dark-bending, from the skirts of the wood, her wounded father seemed to come. He appeared, at times, then hid himself in mist. Bursting into tears she rose. She knew that the chief was low. To her came a beam from his soul, when folded in its storms. Thou art the last of his race, O blue-eyed Dardulena.

Wide-spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hangs forward on their steps. He strews, with dead, the heath. Fingal rejoices over his son. Blue-shielded Cathmor rose.

Son of Alpin, bring the harp, Give Fillan's praise to the wind. Raise high his praise in mine ear, while yet he shines in war.

"Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall! Behold that early beam of thine! The host is withered in its course. No further look, it is dark. Light-trembling from the harp, strike, virgins, strike the sound. No hunter he descends, from the dewy haunt of the bounding roe. He bends not his bow on the wind; nor sends his grey arrow abroad.

"Deep folded in red war! See battle roll against his side. Striding amid the ridgy strife, he pours the deaths of thousands forth. Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends from the skirt of winds — The troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from

wave to wave. His path kindles behind him. Islands shake their heads on the heaving seas! Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall!"

## BOOK VI.

### ARGUMENT.

This book opens with a speech of Fingal, who sees Cathmor descending to the assistance of his flying army. The king dispatches Ossian to the relief of Fillan. He himself retires behind the rock of Cormul, to avoid the sight of the engagement between his son and Cathmor. Ossian advances. The descent of Cathmor described. He rallies the army, renews the battle, and, before Ossian could arrive, engages Fillan himself. Upon the approach of Ossian the combat between the two heroes ceases. Ossian and Cathmor prepare to fight, but night coming on, prevents them. Ossian returns to the place where Cathmor and Fillan fought. He finds Fillan mortally wounded, and leaning against a rock. Their discourse. Fillan dies; his body is laid, by Ossian, in a neighbouring cave. The Caledonian army return to Fingal. He questions them about his son, and, understanding that he was killed, retires, in silence, to the rock of Cormul. Upon the retreat of the army of Fingal, the Fir-bolg advance. Cathmor finds Bran, one of the dogs of Fingal, lying on the shield of Fillan, before the entrance of the cave where the body of that hero lay. His reflections thereupon. He returns in a melancholy mood, to his army. Malthos endeavours to comfort him, by the example of his father Borbar-duthul. Cathmor retires to rest. The song of Sul-malla concludes the book, which ends about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

“CATHMOR rises on his hill! Shall Fingal take the sword of Luno? But what shall become

of thy fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, fair daughter of Inistore. I shall not quench thy early beam. It shines along my soul. Rise, wood-skirted Mora, rise between the war and me! Why should Fingal behold the strife, lest his dark-haired warrior should fall? Amidst the song, O Carril, pour the sound of the trembling harp! Here are the voices of rocks! and there the bright tumbling of waters. Father of Oscar, lift the spear. Defend the young in arms. Conceal thy steps from Fillan. He must not know that I doubt his steel. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire!"

He sunk behind his rock, amid the sound of Carril's song. Brightening in my growing soul, I took the spear of Temora. I saw, along Moi-lena, the wild tumbling of battle; the strife of death in gleaming rows, disjoined and broken round. Fillan is a beam of fire. From wing to wing is his wasteful course. The ridges of war melt before him. They are rolled, in smoke, from the fields.

Now is the coming forth of Cathmor, in the armour of kings! Dark waves the eagle's wing, above his helmet of fire. Unconcerned are his steps, as if they were to the chase of Erin. He raises, at times, his terrible voice. Erin, abashed, gathers round. Their souls return back, like a stream. They wonder at the steps of their fear. He rose, like the beam of the morning, on a haunted heath: the traveller looks back with bending eye, on the field of dreadful forms! Sudden, from the rock of Moi-lena, are Suilmalla's trembling steps. An oak takes the spear from her hand. Half-bent she looses the lance. But then are her eyes on the king, from amid her wander-

ing locks ! No friendly strife is before thee ! No light contending of bows, as when the youth of Inishuna come forth beneath the eye of Conmor !

As the rock of Runo, which takes the passing clouds as they fly, seems growing, in gathered darkness, over the streamy heath ; so seems the chief of Atha taller, as gather his people around. As different blasts fly over the sea, each behind its dark-blue wave ; so Cathmor's words, on every side, pour his warriors forth. Nor silent on his hill is Fillan. He mixes his words with his echoing shield. An eagle he seemed, with sounding wings, calling the wind to his rock, when he sees the coming forth of the roes, on Lutha's rushy field !

Now they bend forward in battle. Death's hundred voices arise. The kings, on either tide, were like fires on the souls of the hosts. Ossian bounded along. High rocks and trees rush tall between the war and me. But I hear the noise of steel, between my clanging arms. Rising, gleaming on the hill, I behold the backward steps of hosts : their backward steps on either side, and wildly-looking eyes. The chiefs were met in dreadful fight ! The two blue-shielded kings ! Tall and dark, through gleams of steel, are seen the striving heroes ! I rush. My fears for Fillan fly, burning across my soul.

I come. Nor Cathmor flies ; nor yet comes on ; he sidelong stalks along. An icy rock, cold, tall, he seems. I call forth all my steel. Silent awhile we stride, on either side of a rushing stream : then, sudden turning, all at once, we raise our pointed spears ! We raise our spears, but night comes down. It is dark and silent round ; but where the distant steps of hosts are sounding over the heath !

I come to the place where Fillan fought. Nor voice nor sound is there. A broken helmet lies on earth, a buckler cleft in twain. Where, Fillan, where art thou, young chief of echoing Morven? He hears me, leaning on a rock, which bends its grey head over the stream. He hears; but sullen, dark he stands. At length I saw the hero!

“Why standest thou, robed in darkness, son of woody Selma? Bright is thy path, my brother, in this dark brown field! Long has been thy strife in battle! Now the horn of Fingal is heard. Ascend, to the cloud of thy father, to his hill of feasts. In the evening mist he sits, and hears the sound of Carril’s harp. Carry joy to the aged, young breaker of the shields!”

“Can the vanquished carry joy? Ossian, no shield is mine! It lies broken on the field. The eagle-wing of my helmet is torn. It is when foes fly before them, that fathers delight in their sons. But their sighs burst forth, in secret, when their young warriors yield. No: Fillan shall not behold the king. Why should the hero mourn?”

“Son of blue-eyed Clatho! O Fillan, awake not my soul. Wert thou not a burning fire before him? Shall he not rejoice? Such fame belongs not to Ossian; yet is the king still a sun to me. He looks on my steps with joy. Shadows never rise on his face. Ascend, O Fillan, to Mora. His feast is spread in the folds of mist.”

“Ossian, give me that broken shield; these feathers that are rolled in the wind. Place them near to Fillan, that less of his fame may fall. Ossian, I begin to fail. Lay me in that hollow rock. Raise no stone above, lest one should ask about my fame.

I am fallen in the first of my fields, fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard know where dwells the lost beam of Clatho?"

"Is thy spirit on the eddying winds, O Fillan, young breaker of shields. Joy pursue my hero, through his folded clouds. The forms of thy fathers, O Fillan, bend to receive their son. I behold the spreading of their fire on Mora; the blue rolling of their wreaths. Joy meet thee, my brother! But we are dark and sad. I behold the foe round the aged. I behold the wasting away of his fame. Thou art left alone in the field, O grey-haired king of Selma!"

I laid him in the hollow rock, at the roar of the nightly streams. One red star looked in on the hero. Winds lift at times his locks. I listen. No sound is heard. The warrior slept! As lightning on a cloud, a thought came rushing along my soul. My eyes roll in fire: my stride was in the clang of steel. "I will find thee, king of Erin! in the gathering of thy thousands find thee. Why should that cloud escape, that quenched our early beam? Kindle your meteors on your hills, my fathers. Light my daring steps. I will consume in wrath†.——But should not

† Here the sentence is designedly left unfinished. The sense is, that he was resolved, like a destroying fire, to consume Cathmor, who had killed his brother. In the midst of this resolution, the situation of Fingal suggests itself to him. in a very strong light. He resolves to return to assist the king in prosecuting the war. But then his shame for not defending his brother recurs to him. He is determined again to go and find out Cathmor. We may consider him as in the act of advancing towards the enemy, when the horn of Fingal sounded on Mora, and called back his people to his presence.



I return? The king is without a son, grey-haired among his foes! His arm is not as in the days of old. His fame grows dim in Erin. Let me not behold him laid low in his latter field.—But can I return to the king? Will he not ask about his son? ‘Thou oughtest to defend young Fillan.’—Ossian will meet the foe. Green Erin, thy sounding tread is pleasant to my ear. I rush on thy ridgy host, to shun the eyes of Fingal.—I hear the voice of the king, on Mora’s misty top! He calls his two sons! I come, my father, in my grief. I come like an eagle, which the flame of night met in the desert, and spoiled of half his wings!”

Distant, round the king, on Mora, the broken ridges of Morven are rolled. They turned their eyes: each darkly bends, on his own ashen spear. Silent stood the king in the midst. Thought on thought rolled over his soul. As waves on a secret mountain-lake each with its back of foam. He looked; no son appeared, with his long-beaming spear. The sighs rose, crowding, from his soul; but he concealed his grief. At length I stood beneath an oak. No voice of mine was heard. What could I say to Fingal in his hour of woe? His words rose, at length, in the midst: the people shrunk backward as he spoke.

“Where is the son of Selma; he who led in war? I behold not his steps, among my people, returning from the field. Fell the young bounding roe, who was so stately on my hills? He fell! for ye are silent. The shield of war is cleft in twain. Let his armour be near to Fingal; and the sword of dark-brown Luno. I am waked on my hills; with morning I descend to war.”

High on Cormul’s rock, an oak is flaming to the

wind. The grey skirts of mist are rolled around ; thither strode the king in his wrath. Distant from the host he always lay, when battle burnt within his soul. On two spears hung his shield on high ; the gleaming sign of death : that shield, which he was wont to strike, by night, before he rushed to war. It was then his warriors knew, when the king was to lead in strife ; for never was this buckler heard, till the wrath of Fingal arose. Unequal were his steps on high, as he shone on the beam of the oak ; he was dreadful as the form of the spirit of night, when he clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist, and, issuing forth, on the troubled ocean, mounts the car of winds.

Nor settled, from the storm, is Erin's sea of war ! they glitter, beneath the moon, and, low-humming, still roll on the field. Alone are the steps of Cathmor, before them on the heath ; he hangs forward, with all his arms, on Morven's flying host. Now had he come to the mossy cave, where Fillan lay in night. One tree was bent above the stream, which glittered over the rock. There shone to the moon the broken shield of Clatho's son ; and near it, on grass, lay hairy footed Bran. He had missed the chief on Mora, and searched him along the wind. He thought that the blue-eyed hunter slept ; he lay upon his shield. No blast came over the heath, unknown to bounding Bran.

Cathmor saw the white breasted dog ; he saw the broken shield. Darkness is blown back on his soul ; he remembers the falling away of the people. They come, a stream ; are rolled away ; another race succeeds. " But some mark the fields, as they pass, with their own mighty names. The heath, through

dark brown years, is theirs; some blue stream winds to their fame. Of these be the chief of Atha, when he lays him down on earth. Often may the voice of future times meet Cathmor in the air; when he strides from wind to wind, or folds himself in the wing of a storm."

Green Erin gathered round the king, to hear the voice of his power. Their joyful faces bend, unequal forward, in the light of the oak. They who were terrible were removed: Lubar winds again in their host. Cathmor was that beam from heaven which shone when his people were dark. He was honoured in the midst. Their souls arose with ardour around. The king alone no gladness showed; no stranger he to war!

"Why is the king so sad?" said Malthos eagle-eyed. "Remains there a foe at Lubar? Lives there among them who can lift the spear? Not so peaceful was thy father, Borbar-duthal king of spears. His rage was a fire that always burned; his joy over fallen foes was great. Three days feasted the grey-haired hero, when he heard that Calmar fell: Calmar, who aided the race of Ullin, from Lara of the streams. Often did he feel, with his hands, the steel which, they said, had pierced his foe. He felt it with his hands, for Borbar-duthul's eyes had failed. Yet was the king a sun to his friends; a gale to lift their branches round. Joy was around him in his halls: he loved the sons of Bolga. His name remains in Atha, like the awful memory of ghosts, whose presence was terrible, but they blew the storm away.—Now let the voices of Erin\* raise the soul of the king; he that shone when war was dark, and laid

\* A poetical expression for the bards of Ireland.

the mighty low. Fonar, from that grey-browed rock, pour the tale of other times : pour it on wide-skirted Erin, as it settles round."

"To me," said Cathmor, "no song shall rise ; nor Fonar sit on the rock of Lubar. The mighty there are laid low. Disturb not their rushing ghosts. Far, Malthos, far remove the sound of Erin's song. I rejoice not over the foe, when he ceases to lift the spear. With morning we pour our strength abroad. Fingal is wakened on his echoing hill."

Like waves blown back by sudden winds, Erin retired, at the voice of the king. Deep-rolled into the field of night, they spread their humming tribes.—Beneath his own tree, at intervals, each bard sat down with his harp. They raised the song, and touched the string : each to the chief he loved. Before a burning oak Sul-malla touched, at times, the harp. She touched the harp, and heard, between, the breezes in her hair. In darkness near, lay the king of Atha, beneath an aged tree. The beam of the oak was turned from him ; he saw the maid, but was not seen. His soul poured forth, in secret, when he beheld her fearful eye. "But battle is before thee, son of Borbar-duthal."

Amidst the harp, at intervals, she listened whether the warrior slept. Her soul was up ; she longed, in secret, to pour her own sad song. The field is silent. On their wings the blasts of night retire. The bards had ceased ; and meteors came, red-winding with their ghosts. The sky grew dark ; the forms of the dead were blended with the clouds. But heedless bends the daughter of Conmor, over the decaying flame. Thou wert alone in her soul, car-

borne chief of Atha. She raised the voice of the song, and touched the harp between.

“Clun-galo\* came; she missed the maid. Where art thou, beam of light? Hunters from the mossy rock, saw ye the blue-eyed fair? Are her steps on grassy Lumon; near the bed of roes? Ah me! I behold her bow in the hall. Where art thou, beam of light?”

“Cease, love of Conmor, cease! I hear thee not on the ridgy heath. My eye is turned on the king, whose path is terrible in war. He for whom my soul is up, in the season of my rest. Deep-bosomed in war he stands; he beholds me not from his cloud. Why, sun of Sul-malla, dost thou not look forth: I dwell in darkness here: wide over me flies the shadowy mist. Filled with dew are my locks: look thou from thy cloud, O sun of Sul-malla’s soul!”



## BOOK VII.

### ARGUMENT.

This book begins about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. The poet describes a kind of mist which rose by night from the lake of Lego, and was the usual residence of the souls of the dead, during the interval between their decease and the funeral song. The appearance of the ghost of Fillan above the cave where his body lay. His voice comes to Fingal on the rock of Cormul. The king strikes the shield of Trenmor, which was an infallible sign of his

\* Clun-galo, the wife of Conmor, king of Inis-hura, and the mother of Sul-malla. She is here represented as missing her daughter, after she had fled with Cathmor.

appearing in arms himself. The extraordinary effect of the sound of the shield. Sul-malla, starting from sleep, awakes Cathmor. Their affecting discourse. She insists with him to sue for peace; he resolves to continue the war. He directs her to retire to the neighbouring valley of Lona, which was the residence of an old Druid, until the battle of the next day should be over. He awakes his army with the sound of his shield. The shield described. Fonar, the bard, at the desire of Cathmor, relates the first settlement of the Fir-bolg in Ireland, under their leader, Larthon. Morning comes. Sul-malla retires to the valley of Lona. A lyric song concludes the book.

FROM the wood-skirted waters of Lego, ascend, at times, grey-bosomed mists; when the gates of the west are closed, on the sun's eagle-eye. Wide, over Lara's stream, is poured the vapour dark and deep: the moon, like a dim shield, is swimming through its folds. With this, clothe the spirits of old their sudden gestures on the wind, when they stride, from blast to blast, along the dusky night. Often, blended with the gale, to some warrior's grave, they roll the mist, a gray dwelling to his ghost, until the songs arise.

A sound came from the desert; it was Conar, king of Inis-fail. He poured his mist on the grave of Fillan, at blue-winding Lubar. Dark and mournful sat the ghost, in his grey ridge of smoke. The blast, at times, rolled him together; but the form returned again. It returned with bending eyes; and dark winding locks of mist.

It was dark. The sleeping host were still, in the skirts of night. The flame decayed, on the hill of Fingal; the king lay lonely on his shield. His eyes were half-closed in sleep: the voice of Fillan came.

"Sleeps the husband of Clatho? Dwells the father of the fallen in rest? Am I forgot in the folds of darkness; lonely in the season of night?"

"Why dost thou mix," said the king, "with the dreams of thy father? Can I forget thee, my son, or thy path of fire in the field? Not such come the deeds of the valiant on the soul of Fingal. They are not there a beam of lightning, which is seen, and is then no more. I remember thee, O Fillan! and my wrath begins to rise."

The king took his deathful spear, and struck the deeply sounding shield; his shield, that hung high in night, the dismal sign of war. Ghosts fled on every side, and rolled their gathered forms on the wind. Thrice from the winding vale arose the voice of deaths. The harps of the bards, untouched, sound mournful over the hill.

He struck again the shield; battles rose in the dreams of his host. The wide-tumbling strife is gleaming over their souls. Blue-shielded kings descend to war. Backward-looking armies fly; and mighty deeds are half-hid in the bright gleams of steel.

But when the third sound arose, deer started from the clefts of their rocks. The screams of fowl are heard, in the desert, as each flew frightened on his blast. The sons of Selma half-rose, and half assumed their spears. But silence rolled back on the host: they knew the shield of the king. Sleep returned to their eyes: the field was dark and still.

No sleep was thine in darkness, blue-eyed daughter of Connor! Sul-malla heard the dreadful shield, and rose, amid the night. Her steps are towards the king of Atha. "Can danger shake his daring soul?"

in doubt, she stands, with bending eyes. Heaven burns with all its stars.

Again the shield resounds ! She rushed. She stopt. Her voice half-rose. It failed. She saw him, amidst his arms, that gleamed to heaven's fire. She saw him dim in his locks, that rose to nightly wind. Away, for fear, she turned her steps, " Why should the king of Erin awake ? Thou art not a dream to his rest, daughter of Inis-huna."

More dreadful rings the shield. Sul-malla starts. Her helmet falls. Loud echoes Lubar's rock, as over it rolls the steel. Bursting from the dreams of night, Cathmor half-rose beneath his tree. He saw the form of the maid above him, on the rock : A red star, with twinkling beam, looked through her floating hair.

" Who comes through night to Cathmor, in the season of his dreams ? Bring'st thou aught of war ? Who art thou, son of night ? Stand'st thou before me, a form of the times of old ? A voice from the fold of a cloud, to warn me of the danger of Erin ?"

" Nor lonely scout am I, nor voice from folded cloud," she said, " but I warn thee of the danger of Erin. Dost thou hear that sound ? It is not the feeble, king of Atha, that rolls his signs on night."

" Let the warrior roll his signs," he replied ; " to Cathmor they are the sounds of harps. My joy is great, voice of night, and burns over all my thoughts. This is the music of kings, on lonely hills, by night ; when they light their daring souls, the sons of mighty deeds ! The feeble dwell alone in the valley of the breeze ; where mists lift their morning skirts, from the blue-winding streams."

" Not feeble, king of men, were they, the fathers



of my race. They dwelt in the folds of battle, in their distant lands. Yet delights not my soul in the sign of death! He, who never yields, comes forth: O send the bard of peace!"

Like a dropping rock in the desert, stood Cathmor in his tears. Her voice came a breeze on his soul, and waked the memory of her land; where she dwelt by her peaceful streams, before he came to the war of Connor.

"Daughter of strangers," he said, (she trembling turned away), "long have I marked thee in thy steel, young pine of Inis-huna. But my soul, I said, is folded in a storm. Why should that beam arise, till my steps return in peace? Have I been pale in thy presence, as thou bidst me to fear the king? The time of danger, O maid, is the season of my soul; for then it swells a mighty stream, and rolls me on the foe.

"Beneath the moss-covered rock of Lona, near his own loud stream; grey in his locks of age, dwells Clonmal king of harps. Above him is his echoing tree, and the dun bounding of roes. The noise of our strife reaches his ear, as he bends in the thoughts of years. There let thy rest be, Sul-malla, until our battle cease. Until I return, in my arms, from the skirts of the evening mist, that rises on Lona, round the dwelling of my love."

A light fell on the soul of the maid: it rose kindled before the king. She turned her face to Cathmor, from amidst her waving locks. "Sooner shall the eagle of heaven be torn from the stream of his roaring wind, when he sees the dun prey before him, the young sons of the bounding roe, than thou, O Cathmor, be turned from the strife of renown. Soon may

I see thee, warrior, from the skirts of the evening mist, when it is rolled around me, on Lona of the streams. While yet thou art distant far, strike, Cathmor, strike the shield, that joy may return to my darkened soul, as I lean on the mossy rock. But if thou shouldst fall, I am in the land of strangers; O send thy voice, from thy cloud, to the maid of Inis-huna!"

"Young branch of green-headed Lumon, why dost thou shake in the storm? Often has Cathmor returned, from darkly-rolling wars. The darts of death are but hail to me; they have often rattled along my shield. I have risen brightened from battle, like a meteor from a stormy cloud. Return not, fair beam, from thy vale, when the roar of battle grows. Then might the foe escape, as from my fathers of old.

"They told to Son-mor, of Clunar, who was slain by Cormac in fight. Three days darkened Son-mor, over his brother's fall. His spouse beheld the silent king, and foresaw his steps to war. She prepared the bow in secret, to attend her blue-shielded hero. To her dwelt darkness, at Atha, when he was not there. From their hundred streams, by night, poured down the sons of Alnecma. They had heard the shield of the king, and their rage arose. In clanging arms, they moved along, towards Ullin of the groves. Son-mor struck his shield, at times, the leader of the war.

"Far behind followed Sul-allin, over the streamy hills. She was a light on the mountain, when they crossed the vale below. Her steps were stately on the vale, when they rose on the mossy hill. She feared to approach the king, who left her in echoing Atha. But when the roar of battle rose; when host

was rolled on host ; when Sonmor burnt, like the fire of heaven in clouds, with her spreading hair came Sul-allin ; for she trembled for her king. He stopt the rushing strife to save the love of heroes. The foe fled by night ; Clunar slept without his blood ; the blood which ought to be poured upon the warrior's tomb.

“ Nor rose the rage of Son-mor, but his days were silent and dark. Sul-allin wandered by her grey streams, with her tearful eyes. Often did she look on the hero, when he was folded in his thoughts. But she shrunk from his eyes, and turned her lone steps away. Battles rose, like a tempest, and drove the mist from his soul. He beheld, with joy, her steps in the hall, and the white rising of her hands on the harp.”

In his arms strode the chief of Atha, to where his shield hung, high, in night : high on a mossy bough, over Lubar's streamy roar. Seven bosses rose on the shield ; the seven voices of the king, which his warriors received, from the wind, and marked over all their tribes.

On each boss is placed a star of night : Can-mathon with beams unshorn ; Col-derna rising from a cloud ; Ul-oicho robed in mist ; and the soft beam of Cathlin glittering on a rock. Smiling, on its own blue wave, Rel-durath half sinks its western light. The red eye of Berthin looks, through a grove, on the hunter, as he returns by night, with the spoils of the bounding roe. Wide, in the midst, arose the cloudless beams of Ton-thena, that star, which looked, by night, on the course of the sea-tossed Larthon : Larthon, the first of Bolga's race, who travelled on the winds. White-bosomed spread the sails of the king, towards

streamy Inis-fail ; dun night was rolled before him, with its skirts of mist. Unconstant blew the winds, and rolled him from wave to wave. Then rose the fiery-haired Ton-thena, and smiled from her parted cloud. Larthon blessed the well-known beam, as it faint gleamed on the deep.

Beneath the spear of Cathmor, rose that voice which awakes the bards. They came, dark-winding from every side : each with the sound of his harp. Before him rejoiced the king, as the traveller, in the day of the sun ; when he hears, far rolling around, the murmur of mossy streams : streams that burst, in the desert, from the rock of roes.

“ Why,” said Fonar, “ hear we the voice of the king, in the season of his rest ? Were the dim forms of thy fathers bending in thy dreams ? Perhap they stand on that cloud and wait for Fonar’s song ; often they come to the fields where their sons are to lift the spear. Or shall our voice arise for him who lifts the spear no more ; he that consumed the field, from Moma of the groves ?”

“ Not forgot is that cloud in war, bard of other times. High shall his tomb rise, on Moi-lena, the dwelling of renown. But, now, roll back my soul to the times of my fathers : to the years when first they rose, on Inis-huna’s waves. Nor alone pleasant to Cathmor is the remembrance of wood-covered Lumon. Lumon of the streams, the dwelling of white-bosomed maids.”

“ Lumon\* of the streams, thou risest on Fonar’s soul ! Thy sun is on thy side, on the rocks of thy bending trees. The dun roe is seen from thy furze ;

\* A hill, in Inis-huna, near the residence of Sul malla.

the deer lifts his branchy head ; for he sees, at times, the hound on the half-covered heath. Slow, on the vale, are the steps of maids, the white armed daughters of the bow : they lift their blue eyes to the hill, from amidst their wandering locks. Not there is the stride of Larthon, chief of Inis-huna. He mounts the wave on his own dark oak, in Cluba's ridgy bay. That oak which he cut from Lumon, to bound along the sea. The maids turn their eyes away, lest the king should be lowly laid ; for never had they seen a ship, dark rider of the wave !

“ Now he dares to call the winds, and to mix with the mist of ocean. Blue Inis-fail rose, in smoke ; but dark-skirted night came down. The sons of Bolga feared. The fiery-haired Tonthena rose. Culbin's bay received the ship, in the bosom of its echoing woods. There issued a stream from Dathuma's horrid cave ; where spirits gleamed at times, with their half-finished forms.

“ Dreams descended on Larthon : he saw seven spirits of his fathers. He heard their half-formed words, and dimly beheld the times to come. He beheld the kings of Atha, the sons of future days. They led their hosts along the field, like ridges of mist, which winds pour, in autumn, over Atha of the groves.

“ Larthon raised the hall of Samla, to the music of the harp. He went forth to the roes of Erin, to their wonted streams. Nor did he forget green-headed Lumon ; he often bounded over his seas, to where white-handed Flathal looked from the hill of roes. Lumon of the foamy streams, thou risest on Fonar's soul !”

Morning pours from the east. The misty heads

of the mountains rise. Valleys show, on every side, the grey winding of their streams. His host heard the shield of Cathmor : at once they rose around like a crowded sea, when first it feels the wings of the wind. The waves know not whither to roll ; they lift their troubled heads.

Sad and slow retired Sul-malla to Lona of the streams. She went, and often turned ; her blue eyes rolled in tears. But when she came to the rock, that darkly covered Lona's vale, she looked, from her bursting soul, on the king, and sunk, at once, behind.

Son of Alpin, strike the string. Is there aught of joy in the harp ? Pour it then on the soul of Ossian : it is folded in mist. I hear thee, O bard, in my might. But cease the lightly trembling sound. The joy of grief belongs to Ossian, amidst his dark-brown years.

Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds ! I hear no sound in thee ; is there no spirit's windy skirt now rustling in thy leaves ? Often are the steps of the dead, in the dark-eddying blasts ; when the moon, a dun-shield, from the east, is rolled along the sky.

Ullin, Carril, and Ryno, voices of the days of old ! Let me hear you, while yet it is dark, to please and awake my soul. I hear you not, ye sons of song ; in what hall of the clouds is your rest ? Do you touch the shadowy harp, robed with morning mist, where the rustling sun comes forth from his green-headed waves ?

## BOOK VIII.

## ARGUMENT.

The fourth morning, from the opening of the poem, comes on. Fingal, still continuing in the place to which he had retired on the preceding night, is seen at intervals, through the mist which covered the rock of Cormul. The descent of the king is described. He orders Gaul, Dermid, and Carril the bard, to go to the valley of Cluna, and conduct, from thence, to the Caledonian army, Ferad-artho, the son of Cairbar, the only person remaining of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland. The king takes the command of the army, and prepares for battle. Marching towards the enemy, he comes to the cave of Lubar, where the body of Fillan lay. Upon seeing his dog Bran, who lay at the entrance of the cave, his grief returns. Cathmor arranges the Irish army in order of battle. The appearance of that hero. The general conflict is described, The actions of Fingal and Cathmor. A storm. The total rout of the Fir-bolg. The two kings engage in a column of mist, on the banks of Lubar. Their attitude and conference after the combat. The death of Cathmor. Fingal resigns the spear of Trenmor to Ossian. The ceremonies observed on that occasion. The spirit of Cathmor, in the mean time, appears to Sul-Malla, in the valley of Lona. Her sorrow. Evening comes on. A feast is prepared. The coming of Ferad-artho is announced by the songs of an hundred bards. The poem closes with a speech of Fingal.

As when the wintry winds have seized the waves of the mountain lake, have seized them in stormy night, and clothed them over with ice; white to the hunter's early eye, the billows still seem to roll. He turns his ear to the sound of each unequal

ridge. But each is silent, gleaming, strewn with boughs and tufts of grass, which shake and whistle to the wind, over their grey seats of frost. So silent shone to the morning the ridges of Morven's host, as each warrior looked up from his helmet towards the hill of the king; the cloud-covered hill of Fingal, where he strode, in the fields of mist. At times is the hero seen, greatly dim in all his arms. From thought to thought rolled the war, along his mighty soul.

Now is the coming forth of the king. First appeared the sword of Luno; the spear half-issuing from a cloud, the shield still dim in mist. But when the stride of the king came abroad, with all his grey, dewy locks in the wind; then rose the shouts of his host over every moving tribe. They gathered, gleaming, round, with all their echoing shields. So rise the green seas round a spirit, that comes down from the squally wind. The traveller hears the sound afar, and lifts his head over the rock. He looks on the troubled bay, and thinks he dimly sees the form. The waves sport unwieldy, round, with all their backs of foam.

Far distant stood the son of Morni, Duthno's race, and Cona's bard. We stood far distant; each beneath his tree. We shunned the eyes of the king; we had not conquered in the field. A little stream rolled at my feet: I touched its light wave with my spear. I touched it with my spear: nor there was the soul of Ossian. It darkly rose, from thought to thought, and sent abroad the sigh.

"Son of Morni," said the king, "Derimid, hunter of roes! why are ye dark, like two rocks, each with its trickling waters? No wrath gathers on Fingal's



soul against the chiefs of men. Ye are my strength in battle: the kindling of my joy in peace. My early voice has been a pleasant gale to your ears, when Fillan prepared the bow. The son of Fingal is not here: nor yet the chase of the bounding roes. But why should the breakers of shields stand, darkened, far away?"

Tall they strode towards the king; they saw him turned to Mora's wind. His tears came down for his blue-eyed son, who slept in the cave of streams. But he brightened before them, and spoke to the broad-shielded kings.

"Crommal, with woody rocks, and misty top, the field of winds, pours forth to the sight blue Lubar's streamy roar. Behind it rolls clear-winding Lavath, in the still vale of deer. A cave is dark in a rock; above it strong-winged eagles dwell; broad-headed oaks, before it, sound in Cluno's wind. Within, in his locks of youth, is Ferad-artho, blue-eyed king, the son of broad-shielded Cairbar, from Ullin of the roes. He listens to the voice of Condan, as, grey he bends in feeble light. He listens, for his foes dwell in the echoing hills of Temora. He comes, at times, abroad, in the skirts of mist, to pierce the bounding roes. When the sun looks on the field, nor by the rock, nor stream is he! He shuns the race of Bolga, who dwell in his fathers' hall. Tell him, that Fingal lifts the spear, and that his foes, perhaps, may fail.

"Lift up, O Gaul, the shield before him. Stretch, Dermid, Temora's spear. Be thy voice in his ear, O Carril, with the deeds of his fathers. Lead him to green Moi-lena, to the dusky field of ghosts; for there I fall forward in battle, in the folds of war.

Before dun night descends, come to high Dunmora's top. Look, from the grey skirts of mist, on Lena of the streams. If there my standard shall float on wind, over Lubar's gleaming stream, then has not Fingal failed in the last of his fields."

Such were his words ; nor aught replied the silent, striding kings. They looked side-long on Erin's host, and darkened, as they went. Never before had they left the king, in the midst of the stormy field. Behind them, touching at times his harp, the grey-haired Carril moved. He foresaw the fall of the people, and mournful was the sound ! It was like a breeze that comes, by fits, over Lego's reedy lake ; when sleep half descends on the hunter, within his mossy cave.

" Why bends the bard of Cona," said Fingal, " over his secret stream ? Is this a time for sorrow, father of low laid Oscar ? Be the warriors remembered in peace : when echoing shields are heard no more. Bend, then, in grief, over the flood, where blows the mountain breeze. Let them pass on thy soul, the blue-eyed dwellers of the tomb. But Erin rolls to war : wide-tumbling, rough, and dark. Lift, Ossian, lift the shield. I am alone, my son !"

As comes the sudden voice of winds to the becalmed ship of Inis-huna, and drives it large, along the deep, dark rider of the wave ; so the voice of Fingal sent Ossian, tall, along the heath. He lifted high his shining shield, in the dusky wing of war : like the broad, blank moon, in the skirt of a cloud, before the storms arise.

Loud, from moss-covered Mora, poured down, at once, the broad-winged war. Fingal led his people forth, king of Morven of streams. On high spreads

the eagle's wing. His grey hair is poured on his shoulders broad. In thunder are his mighty strides. He often stood, and saw, behind, the wide gleaming rolling of armour. A rock he seemed, grey over with ice, whose woods are high in wind. Bright streams leap from its head, and spread their foam on blasts.

Now he came to Lubar's cave, where Fillan darkly slept. Bran still lay on the broken shield; the eagle-wing is strewed by the winds. Bright, from withered furze, looked forth the hero's spear. Then grief stirred the soul of the king, like whirlwinds blackening on a lake. He turned his sudden step, and leaned on his bending spear.

White-breasted Bran came bounding with joy to the known path of Fingal. He came, and looked towards the cave, where the blue-eyed hunter lay, for he was wont to stride, with morning, to the dewy bed of the roe. It was then the tears of the king came down, and all his soul was dark. But as the rising wind rolls away the storm of rain, and leaves the white streams to the sun, and high hills with their heads of grass: so the returning war brightened the mind of Fingal. He bounded, on his spear, over Lubar, and struck his echoing shield. His ridgy host bend forward, at once, with all their pointed steel.

Nor Erin heard, with fear, the sound: wide they came rolling along. Dark Malthos, in the wing of war, looks forward from shaggy brows. Next rose that beam of light Hidalla! then the side-long looking gloom of Maronnan. Blue-shielded Colmar lifts the spear; Cormar shakes his bushy locks on the wind. Slowly, from behind a rock, rose the bright

form of Atha, first appeared his two pointed spears, then the half of his burnished shield : like the rising of a nightly meteor, over the vale of ghosts. But when he shone all abroad, the hosts plunged, at once, into strife. The gleaming waves of steel are poured on either side.

As meet two troubled seas, with the rolling of all their waves, when they feel the wings of contending winds, in the rock-sided firth of Lumen ; along the echoing hills is the dim course of ghosts : from the blast fall the torn groves on the deep, amidst the foamy path of whales. So mixed the hosts ! Now Fingal ; now Cathmor came abroad. The dark tumbling of death is before them : the gleam of broken steel is rolled on their steps, as, loud, the high-bounding kings hewed down the ridge of shields.

Maronnan fell, by Fingal, laid large across a stream. The waters gathered by his side, and leapt grey over his bossy shield. Clonar is pierced by Cathmor ; nor yet lay the chief on earth. An oak seized his hair in his fall. His helmet rolled on the ground. By its thong, hung his broad shield ; over it wandered his streaming blood. Tla-min shall weep, in the hall, and strike her heaving breast.

Nor did Ossian forget the spear in the wing of his war. He strewed the field with dead. Young Hidalla came. " Soft voice of streamy Clonra ! why dost thou lift the steel ? O that we met in the strife of song, in thine own rushy vale ! " Malthos beheld him low, and darkened as he rushed along. On either side of a stream, we bend in the echoing strife. Heaven comes rolling down ; around burst the voices of squally winds. Hills are clothed at times, in fire. Thunder rolls in wreaths of mist. In

darkness shrunk the foe : Morven's warriors stood aghast. Still I bent over the stream, amidst my whistling locks.

Then rose the voice of Fingal, and the sound of the flying foe. I saw the king at times, in lightning, darkly striding in his might. I struck my echoing shield, and hung forward on the steps of Alnecma : the foe is rolled before me, like a wreath of smoke.

The sun looked forth from his cloud. The hundred streams of Moi-lena shone. Slow rose the blue columns of mist, against the glittering hill. Where are the mighty kings? Nor by that stream, nor wood are they! I hear the clang of arms! Their strife is in the bosom of that mist. Such is the contending of spirits in a nightly cloud, when they strive for the wintry wings of winds, and the rolling of the foam-covered waves.

I rushed along. The grey mist rose. Tall, gleaming, they stood at Lubar. Cathmor leaned against a rock. His half-fallen shield received the stream, that leapt from the moss above. Towards him is the stride of Fingal: he saw the hero's blood. His sword fell slowly to his side. He spoke, amidst his darkening joy.

"Yields the race of Borbar-duthul? Or still does he lift the spear? Not unheard is thy name, at Atha, in the green dwelling of strangers. It has come, like the breeze of his desert, to the ear of Fingal. Come to my hill of feasts : the mighty fail, at times. No fire am I to low-laid foes ; I rejoice not over the fall of the brave. To close the wound is mine : I have known the herbs of the hills. I seized their fair heads, on high, as they waved by their secret streams. Thou art dark and silent, king of Atha of strangers !"

“ By Atha of the stream,” he said, “ there rises a mossy rock. On its head is the wandering of boughs, within the course of winds. Dark, in his face, is a cave, with its own loud rill. There have I heard the tread of strangers, when they passed to my hall of shells. Joy rose, like a flame, on my soul; I blest the echoing rock. Here be my dwelling, in darkness; in my grassy vale. From this I shall mount the breeze, that pursues the thistle’s beard; or look down, on blue-winding Atha, from its wandering mist.”

“ Why speaks the king of the tomb? Ossian! the warrior has failed! Joy meet thy soul, like a stream, Cathmor, friend of strangers! My son, I hear the call of years; they take my spear as they pass along. Why does not Fingal, they seem to say, rest within his hall? Dost thou always delight in blood? In the tears of the sad? No; ye dark-rolling years, Fingal delights not in blood. Tears are wintry streams that waste away my soul. But when I lie down to rest then comes the mighty voice of war.— It awakes me in my hall, and calls forth all my steel. It shall call it forth no more; Ossian, take thou thy father’s spear. Lift it, in battle, when the proud arise.

“ My fathers, Ossian, trace my steps; my deeds are pleasant to their eyes. Wherever I come forth to battle, on my field, are their columns of mist.— But mine arm rescued the feeble; the haughty found my rage was fire. Never over the fallen did mine eye rejoice. For this, my fathers shall meet me, at the gates of their airy halls, tall, with robes of light, with mildly-kindled eyes. But, to the proud in arms, they are darkened moons in heaven,

which send the fire of night red-wandering over their face.

“Father of heroes, Trenmor, dweller of eddying winds! I give thy spear to Ossian: let thine eye rejoice. Thee have I seen, at times, bright from between thy clouds: so appear to my son, when he is to lift the spear; then shall he remember thy mighty deeds, though thou art now but a blast.”

He gave the spear to my hand, and raised, at once, a stone on high, to speak to future times, with its grey head of moss. Beneath he placed a sword in earth, and one bright boss from his shield. Dark in thought, awhile he bends: his words, at length, came forth.

“When thou, O stone, shalt moulder down, and lose thee, in the moss of years, then shall the traveller come, and whistling pass away. Thou knowest not, feeble man, that fame once shone on *Moi-lena*. Here *Fingal* resigned his spear, after the last of his fields. Pass away, thou empty shade! in thy voice there is no renown. Thou dwellest by some peaceful stream; yet a few years and thou art gone. No one remembers thee, thou dweller of thick mist! But *Fingal* shall be clothed with fame, a beam of light to other times; for he went forth with echoing steel, to save the weak in arms.”

Brightening in his fame, the king strode to *Lubar's* sounding oak, where it bent, from its rock, over the bright tumbling stream. Beneath it is a narrow plain, and the sound of the fount of the rock. Here the standard of *Morven* poured its wreaths on the wind, to mark the way of *Ferad-artho*, from his secret vale. Bright, from his parted west, the sun of heaven looked abroad. The hero

saw his people and heard their shouts of joy. In broken ridges round, they glittered to the beam. The king rejoiced, as a hunter in his own green vale, when, after the storm is rolled away, he sees the gleaming sides of the rocks. The green thorn shakes its head in their face; from their top look forward the roes.

Grey, at his mossy cave, is bent the aged form of Clonmal. The eyes of the bard had failed. He leaned forward on his staff. Bright in her locks, before him, Sul-malla listened to the tale; the tale of the kings of Atha, in the days of old. The noise of battle had ceased in his ear: he stopt and raised the secret sigh. The spirits of the dead, they said, often lightened along his soul. He saw the king of Atha low, beneath his bending tree.

"Why art thou dark?" said the maid. "The strife of arms is past. Soon shall he come to thy cave, over thy winding streams. The sun looks from the rocks of the west. The mists of the lake arise. Grey, they spread on that hill, the rushy dwelling of roes. From the mist shall my king appear! Behold, he comes in his arms. Come to the cave of Clonmal, O my blest beloved!"

It was the spirit of Cathmor, stalking, large, a gleaming form. He sunk by the hollow stream, that roared between the hills. "It was but the hunter," she said, "who searches for the bed of the roe. His steps are not forth to war; his spouse expects him with night. He shall, whistling, return with the spoils of the dark-brown hinds." Her eyes were turned to the hill; again the stately form came down. She rose in the midst of joy. He retired again in mist. Gradual vanish his limbs of smoke,



and mix with the mountain wind. Then she knew that he fell ! “ King of Erin, art thou low.” Let Ossian forget her grief : it wastes the soul of age.

Evening came down on Moi-lena. Grey rolled the streams of the land. Loud came forth the voice of Fingal : the beam of oaks arose. The people gathered round with gladness, with gladness blended with shades. They sidelong looked to the king, and beheld his unfinished joy. Pleasant from the way of the desert, the voice of music came. It seemed, at first, the noise of a stream, far distant on its rocks. Slow it rolled along the hill, like the ruffled wing of a breeze, when it takes the tufted beard of the rocks, in the still season of night. It was the voice of Condan, mixed with Carril’s trembling harp. They came, with blue-eyed Ferad-artho, to Mora of the streams.

Sudden bursts the song from our bards, on Lena ; the host struck their shields midst the sound. Gladness rose brightening on the king, like the beam of a cloudy day, when it rises on the green hill, before the roar of winds. He struck the bossy shield of kings : at once they cease around. The people lean forward, from their spears, towards the voice of their land.

“ Sons of Morven, spread the feast : send the night away in song. Ye have shone around me, and the dark storm is past. My people are the windy rocks, from which I spread my eagle-wings, when I rush forth to renown, and seize it on its field. Ossian, thou hast the spear of Fingal : it is not the staff of a boy with which he strews the thistle round, young wanderer of the field. No : it is the lance of the mighty, with which they stretched forth their

hands to death. Look to thy fathers, my son: they are awful beams. With morning lead Ferad-artho forth to the echoing halls of Temora. Remind him of the king of Erin: the stately forms of old. Let not the fallen be forgot: they were mighty in the field. Let Carril pour his song, that the kings may rejoice in their mist. To-morrow I spread my sails to Selma's shaded walls; where streamy Duthula winds through the seats of roes."

# CONLATH AND CUTHONA.

A POEM.

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## ARGUMENT.

Conlath was the youngest of Morni's sons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul. He was in love with Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, when Toscar, the son of Kinfena, accompanied by Feruth his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora, where Conlath dwelt. He was hospitably received, and, according to the custom of the times, feasted three days with Conlath. On the fourth he set sail, and coasting the *island of waves*, one of the Hebrides, he saw Cuthona hunting, fell in love with her, and carried her away, by force, in his ship. He was forced, by stress of weather, into I-thona, a desert isle. In the mean time Conlath hearing of the rape, sailed after him, and found him on the point of sailing for the coast of Ireland. They fought; and they and their followers fell by mutual wounds. Cuthona did not long survive; for she died of grief the third day after. Fingal hearing of their unfortunate death, sent Stormal the son of Moran to bury them, but forgot to send a bard to sing the funeral song over their tombs. The ghost of Conlath comes, long after, to Ossian, to intreat him to transmit to posterity, his and Cuthona's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the souls of the deceased were not happy, till their elegies were composed by a bard.

DID not Ossian hear a voice? or is it the sound of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening sun, on my soul. The noise of the chase is renewed. In thought

I lift the spear. But Ossian did hear a voice! Who art thou, son of night? The children of the feeble are asleep. The midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the shield of Fingal that echoes to the blast. It hangs in Ossian's hall. He feels it sometimes with his hands. Yes! I hear thee, my friend! Long has thy voice been absent from mine ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Ossian, son of generous Morni? Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oscar, son of fame? He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the sound of battle arose.

*Ghost of Conlach.* Sleeps the sweet voice of Cona, in the midst of his rustling hall? Sleeps Ossian in his hall, and his friends without their fame? The sea rolls round dark I-thona. Our tombs are not seen in our isle. How long shall our fame be unheard, son of resounding Selma?

*Ossian.* O that mine eyes could behold thee! Thou sittest, dim on thy cloud! Art thou like the mist of Lano? An half-extinguished meteor of fire? Of what are the skirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow? He is gone on his blast like the shade of a wandering cloud. Come from thy wall, O harp! Let me hear thy sound. Let the light of memory rise on I-thona! Let me behold again my friends! And Ossian does behold his friends, on the dark-blue isle. The cave of Thona appears, with its mossy rocks and bending trees. A stream roars at its mouth. Toscar bends over its course. Fercuth is sad by his side. Cuthona sits at a distance and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive me? Or do I hear them speak?

*Toscar.* The night was stormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The sea darkly-tum-

bled beneath the blast. The roaring waves climbed against our rocks. The lightning came often and showed the blasted fern. Fercuth ! I saw the ghost who embroiled the night. Silent he stood, on that bank. His robe of mist flew on the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man he seemed and full of thought !

*Fercuth.* It was thy father, O Toscar. He foresees some death among his race. Such was his appearance on Cromla, before the great Maronnan fell. Erin of hills of grass ! how pleasant art thy vales : silence is near thy blue-streams. The sun is on thy fields. Soft is the sound of the harp in Selama.— Lovely the cry of the hunter on Cromla. But we are in dark I-thona, surrounded by the storm. The billows lift their white heads above our rocks. We tremble amidst the night.

*Toscar.* Whither is the soul of battle fled, Fercuth with locks of age ? I have seen thee undaunted in danger ; thine eyes burning with joy in the fight.— Whither is the soul of battle fled ? Our fathers never feared. Go ; view the settling sea ; the stormy wind is laid. The billows still tremble on the deep. They seem to fear the blast. Go ; view the settling sea. Morning is grey on our rocks. The sun will look soon from his east, in all his pride of light. I lifted up my sails with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath. My course was by a desert isle, where Cuthona pursued the deer. I saw her, like that beam of the sun that issues from the cloud. Her hair was on her heaving breast. She bending forward drew the bow. Her white arm seemed behind her, like the snow of Cromla. Come to my soul, I said, huntress of the desert isle ! But she wastes her time in tears.

She thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthona, lovely maid?

*Cuthona.* A distant steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks. The billow rolls at its feet. On its side is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Mora. There the towers of my love arise. There Conlath looks over the sea for his only love. The daughters of the chase returned. He beheld their downcast eyes. Where is the daughter of Rumar?" But they answered not. My peace dwells on Mora, son of the distant land!

*Toscar.* Cuthona shall return to her peace; to the towers of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toscar. I have feasted in his halls. Rise, ye gentle breezes of Erin. Stretch my sails towards Mora's shores. Cuthona shall rest on Mora; but the days of Toscar must be sad. I shall sit in my cave in the field of the sun. The blast will rustle in my trees, I shall think it is Cuthona's voice. But she is distant far in the halls of the mighty Conlath.

*Cuthona.* Ha! what cloud is that? It carries the ghosts of my fathers. I see the skirts of their robes, like grey and watery mist. When shall I fall, O Rumar? Sad Cuthona foresees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow house?

*Ossian.* He shall behold thee, O maid! He comes along the heaving sea. The death of Toscar is dark on his spear. A wound is in his side. He is pale at the cave of Thona. He shows his ghastly wound. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthona? The chief of Mora dies. The vision grows dim on my mind. I behold the chiefs no more. But, O ye bards of future times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears.

He fell before his day. Sadness darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his shield on the wall, and it was bloody. She knew that her hero fell. Her sorrow was heard on Mora. Art thou pale on thy rock, Cuthona, beside the fallen chiefs? Night comes, and day returns, but none appears to raise their tomb. Thou frightenest the screaming fowls away. Thy tears for ever flow. Thou art pale as a watery cloud, that rises from a lake!

The sons of green Selma came. They found Cuthona cold. They raised a tomb over the heroes. She rests at the side of Conlath. Come not to my dreams, O Conlath! Thou hast received thy fame. Be thy voice far distant from my hall; that sleep may descend at night. O that I could forget my friends; till my footsteps should cease to be seen: till I come among them with joy, and lay my aged limbs in the narrow house.

# BERRATHON,

A POEM.

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## ARGUMENT.

Fingal, in his voyage to Lochlin, whither he had been invited by Starno the father of Agandecca, touched at Berrathon, an island of Scandinivia, where he was kindly entertained by Larthmor, the petty king of the place, who was a vassal of the supreme kings of Lochlin. The hospitality of Larthmor gained him Fingal's friendship, which that hero manifested, after the imprisonment of Larthmor by his own son, by sending Ossian and Toscar, the father of Malvina, so often mentioned, to rescue Larthmor, and to punish the unnatural behaviour of Uthal. Uthal was handsome, and, by the ladies, much admired. Nina-thoma, the beautiful daughter of Tor-thoma, a neighbouring prince, fell in love and fled with him. He proved inconstant; for another lady, whose name is not mentioned, gaining his affections, he confined Nina-thoma to a desert island near the coast of Berrathon. She was relieved by Ossian, who, in company with Toscar, landing on Berrathon, defeated the forces of Uthal, and killed him in a single combat. Nina-thoma, whose love not all the bad behaviour of Uthal could erase, hearing of his death, died of grief. In the mean time Larthmor is restored, and Ossian and Toscar return in triumph to Fingal.

The poem opens with an elegy on the death of Malvina the daughter of Toscar, and closes with presages of Ossian's death.

BEND thy blue course, O stream! round the narrow plain of Lutha. Let the green woods hang over it, from their hills; the hills look on it at noon.



The thistle is there on its rock, and shakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head, waving, at times, to the gale. "Why dost thou awake me, O gale?" it seems to say, "I am covered with the drops of heaven. The time of my fading is near, the blast that shall scatter my leaves. To-morrow shall the traveller come; he that saw me in my beauty shall come. His eyes will search the field, but they will not find me." So shall they search in vain for the voice of Cona, after it has failed in the field. The hunter shall come forth in the morning, and the voice of my harp shall not be heard. "Where is the son of car-borne Fingal?" The tear will be on his cheek! Then come thou, O Malvina; with all thy music, come! Lay Ossian in the plain of Lutha; let his tomb rise in the lovely field.

Malvina! where art thou, with thy songs, with the soft sound of thy steps. Son of Alpin, art thou near? where is the daughter of Toscar? "I passed, O son of Fingal, by Tor-lutha's mossy walls. The smoke of the hall was ceased. Silence was among the trees of the hill. The voice of the chase was over. I saw the daughters of the bow. I asked about Malvina, but they answered not. They turned their faces away: thin darkness covered their beauty. They were like stars, on a rainy hill, by night, each looking faintly through the mist."

Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely beam; soon hast thou set on our hills! The steps of thy departure were stately, like the moon, on the blue-trembling wave. But thou hast left us in darkness, first of the maids of Lutha! We sit, at the rock, and there is no voice; no light but the meteor of fire! Soon hast thou set, O Malvina, daughter of generous Toscar!

But thou risest like the beam of the east, among the spirits of thy friends, where they sit, in their stormy halls, the chambers of the thunder. A cloud hovers over Cona. Its blue curling sides are high. The winds are beneath it, with their wings. Within it is the dwelling of Fingal. There the hero sits in darkness. His airy spear is in his hand. His shield, half-covered with clouds, is like the darkened moon : when one half still remains in the wave, and the other looks sickly on the field

His friends sit around the king, on mist.' They hear the songs of Ullin : he strikes the half-viewless harp. He raises the feeble voice. The lesser heroes, with a thousand meteors, light the airy hall. Malvina rises in the midst ; a blush is on her cheek. She beholds the unknown faces of her fathers. She turns aside her humid eyes. " Art thou come so soon," said Fingal, " daughter of generous Toscar? Sadness dwells in the halls of Lutha. My aged son is sad ! I hear the breeze of Cona, that was wont to lift thy heavy locks. It comes to the hall, but thou art not there. Its voice is mournful among the arms of thy fathers ! Go, with thy rustling wing, O breeze, sigh on Malvina's tomb. It rises yonder beneath the rock, at the blue stream of Lutha. The maids\* are departed to their place : thou, alone, O breeze, mournest there."

But who comes from the dusky west supported on a cloud ? A smile is on his grey, watery face. His locks of mist fly on wind. He bends forward on his airy spear. It is thy father, Malvina. " Why shinest thou so soon on our clouds," he says, " O lovely light of Lutha. But thou wert sad, my daughter.

That is, the young virgins who sung the funeral elegy over her tomb.

Thy friends had passed away. The sons of little men were in the hall. None remained of the heroes, but Ossian, king of spears !”

And dost thou remember Oscar, car-borne Toscar, son of Conloch? The battles of our youth were many. Our swords went together to the field.— They saw us coming like two falling rocks. The sons of the stranger fled. “There come the warriors of Cona !” they said, “their steps are in the paths of the flying.” Draw near, son of Alpin, to the song of the aged. The deeds of other times are in my soul. My memory beams on the days that are past : on the days of mighty Toscar, when our path was in the deep. Draw near, son of Alpn, to the last sound of the voice of Cona !

The king of Morven commanded. I raised my sails to the wind. Toscar chief of Lutha stood at my side : I rose on the dark-blue wave. Our course was to sea-surrounded Berrathon, the isle of many storms. There dwelt with his locks of age, the stately strength of Larthmor ; Larthmor, who spread the feast of shells to Fingal, when he went to Sarno’s halls, in the days of Agandecca. But when the chief was old, the pride of his son arose ; the pride of fair-haired Uthal, the love of a thousand maids. He bound the aged Larthmor, and dwelt in his sounding halls.

Long pined the king in his cave, beside his rolling sea. Day did not come to his dwelling ; nor the burning oak by night. But the wind of ocean was there, and the parting beam of the moon. The red star looked on the king, when it trembled on the western wave. Snitho came to Selma’s halls. Snitho the friend of Larthmor’s youth. He told of the king

of Berrathon : the wrath of Fingal arose. Thrice he assumed the spear, resolved to stretch his hand to Uthal. But the memory of his deeds rose before the king. He sent his son and Toscar. Our joy was great on the rolling sea. We often half-unsheathed our swords. For never before had we fought alone in the battles of the spear.

Night came down on the ocean. The winds departed on their wings. Cold and pale is the moon. The red stars lift their heads on high. Our course is slow along the coast of Berrathon. The white waves tumble on the rocks. "What voice is that," said Toscar, "which comes between the sounds of the waves? It is soft but mournful, like the voice of departed bards. But I behold a maid. She sits on the rock alone. Her head bends on her arm of snow. Her dark hair is in the wind. Hear, son of Fingal, her song; it is smooth as the gliding stream." We came to the silent bay, and heard the maid of night.

"How long will ye roll around me, blue-tumbling waters of ocean? My dwelling was not always in caves, nor beneath the whistling tree. The feast was spread in Tor-thoma's hall. My father delighted in my voice. The youths beheld me in the steps of my loveliness. They blessed the dark-haired Nina-thoma. It was then thou didst come, O Uthal, like the sun of heaven! The souls of the virgins are thine, son of generous Larthmor! But why dost thou leave me alone, in the midst of roaring waters! Was my soul dark with thy death? Did my white hand lift the sword? Why hast thou left me alone, king of high Finthormo?"

The tear started from my eye, when I heard the

voice of the maid. I stood before her in my arms, I spoke the words of peace ! Lovely dweller of the cave ! what sigh is in thy breast ? Shall Ossian lift his sword in thy presence, the destruction of thy foes ? Daughter of Tor-thoma, rise. I have heard the words of thy grief. The race of Morven are around thee, who never injured the weak. Come to our dark-bosomed ship ! thou brighter than the setting moon ! Our course is to the rocky Berrathon, to the echoing walls of Finthormo." She came in her beauty ; she came with all her lovely steps. Silent joy brightened in her face ; as when the shadows fly from the field of spring ; the blue stream is rolling in brightness, and the green bush bends over its course.

The morning rose with its beams. We came to Rothma's bay. A boar rushed from the wood : my spear pierced his side, and he fell. I rejoiced over the blood. I foresaw my growing fame. But now the sound of Uthal's train came, from the high Finthormo. They spread over the heath to the chase of the boar. Himself comes slowly on, in the pride of his strength. He lifts two pointed spears. On his side is the hero's sword. Three youths carry his polished bows. The bounding of five dogs is before him. His heroes move on, at a distance, admiring the steps of the king. Stately was the son of Larthmor ! but his soul was dark ! Dark as the troubled face of the moon, when it foretels the storms.

We rose on the heath before the king. He stopt in the midst of his course. His heroes gathered around. A grey haired bard advanced. " Whence are the sons of the strangers ?" began the bard of song. " The children of the unhappy come to Ber-

rathon : to the sword of car-borne Uthal. He spreads no feast in his hall. The blood of strangers is on his streams. If from Selma's walls ye come, from the mossy walls of Fingal, choose three youths to go to your king to tell of the fall of his people. Perhaps the hero may come and pour his blood on Uthal's sword. So shall the fame of Finthormo arise, like the growing tree of the vale !”

“Never will it rise, O bard,” I said in the pride of my wrath. “He would shrink from the presence of Fingal, whose eyes are the flames of death. The son of Comhal comes, and kings vanish before him. They are rolled together, like mist, by the breath of his rage. Shall three tell to Fingal, that his people fell? Yes! they may tell it, bard! but his people shall fall with fame !”

I stood in the darkness of my strength. Toscar drew his sword at my side. The foe came on like a stream. The mingled sound of death arose. Man took man ; shield met shield : steel mixed its beams with steel. Darts hiss through air. Spears ring on mails. Swords on broken bucklers bound. As the noise of an aged grove beneath the roaring wind, when a thousand ghosts break the trees by night, such was the din of arms ! But Uthal fell beneath my sword. The sons of Berrathon fled. It was then I saw him in his beauty, and the tear hung in my eye ! “Thou art fallen, young tree,” I said, “with all thy beauty round thee. Thou art fallen on thy plains, and the field is bare. The winds come from the desert ; there is no sound in thy leaves ! Lovely art thou in death, son of car-borne Larthmor.”

Nina-thoma sat on the shore. She heard the

sound of battle. She turned her red eyes on Lothmal, the grey-haired bard of Selma. He alone had remained on the coast, with the daughter of Tor-thoma. "Son of the times of old!" she said, "I hear the noise of death." Thy friends have met with Uthal, and the chief is low. O that I had remained on the rock, inclosed with the tumbling waves. Then would my soul be sad, but his death would not reach my ear. Art thou fallen on thy heath, O son of high Finthormo? Thou didst leave me on a rock, but my soul was full of thee. Son of high Finthormo! art thou fallen on thy heath?"

She rose pale in her tears. She saw the bloody shield of Uthal. She saw it in Ossian's hand. Her steps are distracted on the heath. She flew. She found him. She fell. Her soul came forth in a sigh. Her hair is spread on her face. My bursting tears descend. A tomb arose on the unhappy. My song of woe was heard. "Rest, hapless children of youth. Rest at the noise of that mossy stream. The virgins will see your tomb, at the chase, and turn away their weeping eyes. Your fame will be in song. The voice of the harp will be heard in your praise. The daughters of Selma shall hear it: your renown shall be in other lands. Rest, children of youth, at the noise of the mossy stream."

Two days we remained on the coast. The heroes of Berrathon convened. We brought Larthmor to his halls. The feast of shells is spread. The joy of the aged was great. He looked to the arms of his fathers: the arms which he left in his hall, when the pride of Uthal rose. We were renowned before Larthmor. He blessed the chiefs of Morven. He knew not that his son was low, the stately strength of Uthal. They had told, that he had retired to the woods, with the tears

of grief. They had told it, but he was silent in the tomb of Rothma's heath.

On the fourth day we raised our sails, to the roar of the northern wind. Larthmor came to the coast. His bards exalted the song. The joy of the king was great; he looked to Rothma's gloomy heath. He saw the tomb of his son. The memory of Uthal rose. "Who of my heroes," he said, "lies there? he seems to have been of the kings of men. Was he renowned in my halls before the pride of Uthal rose? Ye are silent, sons of Berrathon! is the king of heroes low? My heart melts for thee, O Uthal! though thy hand was against thy father. O that I had remained in the cave! that my son had dwelt in Finthormo! I might have heard the tread of his feet, when he went to the chase of the boar. I might have heard his voice on the blasts of my cave. Then would my soul be glad: but now darkness dwells in my halls."

Such were my deeds, son of Alpin, when the arm of my youth was strong. Such the actions of Toscar, the car-borne son of Conloch. But Toscar is on his flying cloud. I am alone at Lutha. My voice is like the last sound of the wind, when it forsakes the woods. But Ossian shall not be long alone. He sees the mist that shall receive his ghost. He beholds the mist that shall form his robe, when he appears on his hills. The sons of feeble men shall behold me, and admire the stature of the chiefs of old. They shall creep to their caves. They shall look to the sky with fear: for my steps shall be in the clouds. Darkness shall roll on my side.

Lead, son of Alpin, lead the aged to his woods. The winds begin to rise. The dark wave of the lake resounds. Bends there not a tree from Mora with its branches bare? It bends, son of Alpin, in the



rustling blast. My harp hangs on a blasted branch. The sound of its strings is mournful. Does the wind touch thee, O harp, or is it some passing ghost? It is the hand of Malvina! Bring me the harp, son of Alpin. Another song shall rise. My soul shall depart in the sound. My fathers shall hear it in their airy hall. Their dim faces shall hang, with joy, from their clouds; and their hands receive their son.—The aged oak bends over the stream. It sighs with all its moss. The withered fern whistles near, and mixes, as it waves, with Ossian's hair.

“Strike the harp, and raise the song; be near, with all your wings, ye winds. Bear the mournful sound away to Fingal's airy hall. Bear it to Fingal's hall, that he may hear the voice of his son; the voice of him that praised the mighty!

“The blast of north opens thy gates, O king! I behold thee sitting on mist, dimly gleaming in all thine arms. Thy form now is not the terror of the valiant. It is like a watery cloud; when we see the stars behind it, with their weeping eyes. Thy shield is the aged moon; thy sword a vapour half kindled with fire. Dim and feeble is the chief, who travelled in brightness before! But thy steps are on the winds of the desert. The storms are darkening in thy hand. Thou takest the sun in thy wrath, and hidest him in thy clouds. The sons of little men are afraid. A thousand showers descend. But when thou comest forth in thy mildness, the gale of the morning is near thy course. The sun laughs in his blue fields. The grey stream winds in its vale. The bushes shake their green heads in the wind. The roes bound towards the desert.

“There is a murmur in the heath! the stormy winds abate! I hear the voice of Fingal. Long has it been absent from mine ear; ‘Come, Ossian, come

away,' he says. Fingal has received his fame. We passed away like flames that had shone for a season. Our departure was in renown. Though the plains of our battles are dark and silent, our fame is in the four grey stones. The voice of Ossian has been heard. The harp has been strung in Selma. 'Come, Ossian, come away,' he says; come, fly with thy fathers on clouds.' I come, I come, thou king of men! The life of Ossian fails. I begin to vanish on Cona. My steps are not seen in Selma. Beside the stone of Mora I shall fall asleep. 'The winds whistling in my grey hairs, shall not awaken me. Depart on thy wings, O wind! thou canst not disturb the rest of the bard. The night is long, but his eyes are heavy. Depart, thou rustling blast.'

But why art thou sad, son of Fingal? Why grows the cloud of thy soul? The chiefs of other times are departed. They have gone without their fame.—The sons of future years shall pass away. Another race shall arise. The people are like the waves of ocean; like the leaves of woody Morven, they pass away in the rustling blast, and other leaves lift their green heads on high."

"Did thy beauty last, O Ryno? Stood the strength of car-borne Oscar? Fingal himself departed. The halls of his fathers forgot his steps. Shalt thou then remain, thou aged bard! when the mighty have failed? But my fame shall remain, and grow like the oak of Morven; which lifts its broad head to the storm, and rejoices in the course of the wind."



A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

THE ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

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INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but, at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain. The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity. The arts of polished life, by which alone facts can be preserved with certainty, are the production of a well-formed community. It is then historians begin to write, and public transactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obscurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find so much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; posterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their ancestors.

The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakness. They swallowed the most absurd fables

concerning the high antiquities of their respective nations. Good historians, however, rose very early amongst them, and transmitted, with lustre, their great actions to posterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or lost in obscurity. The Celtic nations afford a striking instance of this kind. They, though once the masters of Europe from the north of the river Oby, in Russia, to Cape Finisterre, the western point of Galicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in history. They trusted their fame to tradition and the songs of their bards, which by the vicissitude of human affairs are long since lost. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them; and the traces of it being found in places so widely distant from each other, serves only to show the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their history.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which possessed old Gaul is most renowned; not perhaps on account of worth superior to the rest, but for their wars with a people who had historians to transmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to posterity.— Britain was first peopled by them, according to the testimony of the best authors; its situation in respect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all dispute, is that the same customs and language prevailed amongst the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæsar.

The colony from Gaul possessed themselves at first, of that part of Britain which was next to their own country; and spreading northward, by degrees as they increased in numbers, peopled the whole

island. Some adventurers passing over from those parts of Britain that are within sight of Ireland were the founders of the Irish nation ; which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons ; and his testimony is unquestionable, when we consider that for many ages, the language and customs of both nations were the same.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract ; but even the ancient Germans themselves were Gauls. The present Germans, properly so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and customs of the two nations were similar ; but their language different. The Germans are the genuine descendants of the ancient Scandinavians, who crossed, at an early period, the Baltic. The Celtæ, anciently, sent many colonies into Germany, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and customs, till they were dissipated in the Roman empire ; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were descended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the same with the Gauls that first possessed themselves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this distance of time. Whatever their origin was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a presumption that they were long before settled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of aristocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where

the Druids bore the chief sway. This order of men seems to have been formed on the same principles with the Dactyli, Idæ, and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourse with heaven, their magic and divination, were the same. The knowledge of the Druids in natural causes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The esteem of the populace soon increased into a veneration for the order; which these cunning and ambitious priests took care to improve, to such a degree, that they, in a manner, engrossed the management of civil, as well as religious matters. It is generally allowed, that they did not abuse this extraordinary power; the preserving their character of sanctity was so essential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppression. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legislative power was entirely in the hands of the Druids. It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greatest danger, under one head. This temporary king, or Vergobretus, was chosen by them, and generally laid down his office at the end of the war. These priests enjoyed long this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the second century that their power among the Caledonians began to decline. The traditions concerning Trathal and Cormac, ancestors to Fingal, are full of the particulars of the fall of the Druids: a singular fate, it must be owned, of priests, who had once established their superstition.

The continual wars of the Caledonians against

the Romans hindered the better sort from initiating themselves, as the custom formerly was, into the order of the Druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magistrate, was chosen, without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office against their will. Continual power strengthened his interest among the tribes, and enabled him to send down, as hereditary to his posterity, the office he had only received himself by election.

It is no matter of wonder, then, that Fingal and his son Ossian disliked the Druids, who were the declared enemies to their succession in the supreme magistracy. It is a singular case, it must be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the poems ascribed to Ossian, as the poetical compositions of other nations are so closely connected with their mythology. But gods are not necessary when the poet has genius. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the Bard immediately transferred the glory of the action to him who had given that aid.

Those who write in the *Gælic* language seldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they professedly write of religion, they never mix, with their compositions, the actions of their heroes. This custom alone, even though the religion of the Druids had not been previously extinguished, may, in some measure, excuse the author's silence concerning the religion of ancient times.

To allege, that a nation is void of all religion, would betray ignorance of the history of mankind. The traditions of their fathers, and their own

observations on the works of nature, together with that superstition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raised in the minds of men some idea of a superior being. Hence it is, that in the darkest times, and amongst the most barbarous nations, the very populace themselves had some faint notion, at least, of a divinity. The Indians, who worship no God, believe that he exists. It would be doing injustice to the author of these poems, to think that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greatest of all truths.— But let his religion be what it will, it is certain that he has not alluded to Christianity, or any of its rites, in his poems; which ought to fix his opinions, at least, to an æra prior to that religion. Conjectures, on this subject, must supply the place of proof. The persecution begun by Dioclesian, in the year 303, is the most probable time in which the first dawning of Christianity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Constantius Chlorus, who commanded then in Britain, induced the persecuted Christians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or through fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and settled among the Caledonians; who were ready to hearken to their doctrines, if the religion of the Druids was exploded long before.

These missionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took possession of the cells and groves of the Druids: and it was from this retired life they had the name of Culdees, which, in the language of the country, signified, ‘the sequestered persons.’ It was with



one of the Culdees that Ossian, in his extreme old age, is said to have disputed concerning the Christian religion. This dispute, they say, is extant, and is couched in verse, according to the custom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Ossian of the Christian tenets, shows, that that religion had only lately been introduced, as it is not easy to conceive, how one of the first rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The dispute bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The obsolete phrases and expressions peculiar to the time, prove it to be no forgery. If Ossian then lived at the introduction of Christianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century.— Tradition here steps in with a kind of proof.

The exploits of Fingal against Caracul, the son of the 'king of the world,' are among the first brave actions of his youth. A complete poem, which relates to this subject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the emperor Severus, after returning from his expedition against the Caledonians, at York, fell into the tedious illness of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, resuming courage from his indisposition, took arms in order to recover the possessions they had lost. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to destroy it with fire and sword. His orders were but ill executed, for his son, Caracalla, was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with schemes to supplant his brother Geta. He scarcely had entered the

enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead. A sudden peace is patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Cassius, the country they had lost to Servus was restored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the son of Severus, the emperor of Rome, whose dominions were extended almost over the known world, was not without reason called the 'son of the king of the world.' The space of time between 211, the year that Servus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not so great, but Ossian, the son of Fingal, might have seen the Christians whom the persecution under Dioclesian had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

In one of the many lamentations on the death of Oscar, a battle which he fought against Caros, king of ships, on the banks of the winding Carun, is mentioned among his great actions. It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here is the same with the noted usurper Carausius, who assumed the purple in the year 287, and seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Hercules in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called the 'king of ships.' The 'winding Carun' is that small river retaining still the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carausius repaired to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians. Several other passages in traditions allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two just mentioned clearly fix the epocha of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Irish histories, which place the death of Fingal, the son of Comhal, in th

year 283, and that of Oscar and their own celebrated Cairbre, in the year 296.

Some people may imagine, that the allusions to the Roman history might have been derived, by tradition, from learned men, more than from ancient poems. This must then have happened at least three ages ago, as these allusions are mentioned often in the compositions of those times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbarism overspread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men addicted to superstition, contracted a narrowness that destroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compositions of those times trivial and puerile to the last degree. But let it be allowed, that amidst all the untoward circumstances of the age, a genius might arise ; it is not easy to determine what could induce him to allude to the Roman times. We find no fact to favour any designs which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century.

The strongest objection to the antiquity of the poems now given to the public under the name of Ossian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through so many centuries. Ages of barbarism, some will say, could not produce poems abounding with the disinterested and generous sentiments, so conspicuous in the compositions of Ossian ; and could these ages produce them, it is impossible but they must be lost, or altogether corrupted, in a long succession of barbarous generations.

These objections naturally suggest themselves to men unacquainted with the ancient state of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the Druids, did not share their bad

fortune. They were spared by the victorious king, as it was through their means only he could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to establish his power by their songs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had no ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhymes of the bards. In the meantime, men assumed sentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbarism. The bards, who were originally the disciples of the Druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated in the learning of that celebrated order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and ascribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs made this ideal character the model of their conduct; and, by degrees, brought their minds to that generous spirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as described in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in station. His emulation continuing, formed at last the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a polished people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the characteristics of a nation, their actions become interesting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous spirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of perpetuating them. This is the true source of that divine inspiration, to which the poets of all ages pretended. When they found their

themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varnished them over with fables supplied by their own fancy, or furnished by absurd traditions. These fables, however ridiculous, had their abettors; posterity either implicitly believed them, or, through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what character she pleased of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preservation of what remain of the more ancient poems. Their poetical merit made their heroes famous in a country where heroism was much esteemed and admired. The posterity of these heroes, or those who pretended to be descended from them, heard with pleasure the eulogiums of their ancestors: bards were employed to repeat the poems, and to record the connexion of their patrons with chiefs so renowned. Every chief in process of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at last hereditary. By the succession of these bards, the poems concerning the ancestors of the family were handed down from generation to generation; they were repeated to the whole clan on solemn occasions, and always alluded to in the new compositions of the bards. This custom came down to near our own times; and after the bards were discontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compositions, and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their poems.

The use of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the institution of the bards:

the records of the families, of their patrons, their own, and more ancient poems, were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compositions were admirably contrived for that purpose. They were adapted to music; and the most perfect harmony was observed. Each verse was so connected with those which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a stanza, it was almost impossible to forget the rest. The cadences followed in so natural a gradation, and the words were so adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raised to a certain key, that it was almost impossible, from a similarity of sound, to substitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the sense or weaken the expression. The numerous flexions of consonants, and variation in declension, make the language very copious.

The descendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its isles, were not singular in this method of preserving the most precious monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verse, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became so fond of this custom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes, were preserved in the same manner. All the historical monuments of the old Germans were comprehended in their ancient songs; which were either hymns to their Gods, or elegies in praise of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great

events in their nation, which were carefully interwoven with them. This species of composition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition. The care they took to have the poems taught to their children, the uninterrupted custom of repeating them upon certain occasions, and the happy measure of the verse, served to preserve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eight century; and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing, that is not committed to writing, fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcillasso composed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had lost all other monuments of their history, and it was from ancient poems, which his mother, a princess of the blood of the Yncas, taught him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his history. If other nations then, that had often been overrun by enemies, and had sent abroad and received colonies, could for many ages preserve, by oral tradition, their laws and histories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient Scots, a people so free of intermixture with foreigners, and so strongly attached to the memory of their ancestors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

What is advanced, in this short Dissertation, it must be confessed, is mere conjecture. Beyond the reach of records, is settled a gloom, which no ingenuity can penetrate. The manners described, in these poems, suit the ancient Celtic times, and no other period that is known in history. We must

therefore, place the heroes far back in antiquity ; and it matters little, who were their contemporaries in other parts of the world. If we have placed Fingal in his proper period, we do honour to the manners of barbarous times. He exercised every manly virtue in Caledonia, while Heligobus disgraced human nature at Rome.



A  
DISSERTATION  
CONCERNING  
THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.

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THE history of those nations, who originally possessed the north of Europe, is less known than their manners. Destitute of the use of letters, they themselves had not the means of transmitting their great actions to remote posterity. Foreign writers saw them only at a distance, and described them as they found them. The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and consequently their history unworthy of being investigated. Their manners and singular character were matters of curiosity, as they committed them to record. Some men, otherwise of great merit, among themselves, give into confined ideas on this subject. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any nation destitute of the use of letters.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale

of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in the times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and those manly pursuits, from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society, the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie in some degree concealed behind forms, and artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigour. The times of regular government, and polished manners, are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted, in their revolutions and migration, which were so frequent and universal, that no kingdom in Europe is now possessed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who in process of time, lost all knowledge of their own origin. If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time, free from intermixture with foreigners. We are

to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country ; places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from those who possess the low and most fertile parts of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free from that toil and business, which engross the attention of a commercial people. Their amusement consisted in hearing or repeating their songs and traditions, and these entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods are only to be regarded in so far as they coincide with contemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the historians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itself, they gave a long list of ancient kings, and a detail of their transactions, with a scrupulous exactness. One might naturally suppose, that, when they had no authentic annals, they should, at least, have recourse to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular system of history. Of both they seem to have been equally destitute.

Born in the low country, and strangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themselves with copying from one another, and retailing the same fictions, in a new colour and dress.

John Fordun was the first who collected those fragments of the Scots history, which had escaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in so far as they concerned recent transactions, deserved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unsatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the Pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Destitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found, there, that the Irish bards had carried their pretensions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions and the order of succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political

prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of Caledonians. From their very name, it appears, that they were of those Gauls, who possessed themselves originally of Britian. It is compounded of two Celtic words, *Cael* signifying Celts, or Gauls, and *Dun* or *Don*, a hill; so that Caeldon or Caledonians, is as much as to say, the 'Celts of the hill country.' The Highlanders, to this day call themselves Cael, and their language Caelic, or Galic, and their country Caeldock, which the Romans softened into Caledonia. This of itself is sufficient to demonstrate, that they are the genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of Scots, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word *Cael*, which signifies 'stranger,' as well as Gauls, or Celts, some have imagined, that the ancestors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the rest of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, say they, is supported by Tacitus, who from several circumstances, concludes, that the Ca-

ledonians were of German extraction. A discussion of a point so intricate, at this distance of time, could neither be satisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we find the Scots in the north. Porphyry makes the first mention of them about that time. As the Scots were not heard of before that period, most writers supposed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the Picts were the only genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians. This mistake is easily removed. The Caledonians, in process of time, became naturally divided into two distinct nations, as possessing parts of the country entirely different in their nature and soil. The western coast of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the east, the country is plain and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as suited best with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called, by their neighbours, Scuite, or 'the wandering nation;' which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of Scoti.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who possessed the east side of Scotland, as this division of the country was plain and fertile, applied themselves to agriculture, and raising of corn. It was from this, that the Gaelic name of the Picts proceeded; for they are called, in that language, Cruithnich, i. e. 'the wheat or corn eaters.' As the Picts lived in a country so different in its nature from that possessed by the Scots, so their national character suffered a

material change. Unobstructed by mountains or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became sooner established among them than among the Scots, and consequently, they were much sooner governed by civil magistrates and laws. This, at last, produced so great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almost continual quarrels and animosities subsisted between them. These animosities, after some ages, ended in the subversion of the Pictish kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to most of the Scots writers, who seem to think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate, than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was lost, and that those that remained were so completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they soon lost all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictish government is placed so near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or history remaining. This favours the system I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of course would be different. The contrary is the case. The names of places in the Pictish dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Gaelic original, which is a convincing proof, that the two nations were, of old, one and the same, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their situation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of Picts is said to have been given by the Romans to the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. The story is silly, and the argument absurd. But let us revere antiquity in her very follies. This circumstance made some imagine, that the Picts were of British extract. and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, settled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be easily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumstance, affirm some antiquaries, proceeded the name of the latter, to distinguish them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who discontinued it after the Roman conquest.

The Caledonians, most certainly, acquired a considerable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coast intersected with many arms of the sea, and in islands, divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous friths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they very early found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within sight of their own country. That Ireland was first peopled from Britain, is, at length, a matter that admits of no doubt. The vicinity of the two islands; the exact correspondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are sufficient proofs, even if we had not the testimony of authors of undoubted veracity to confirm it. The abettors of the most romantic systems of Irish antiquities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain in an improbable and remote æra. I shall easily admit that the colony of



the Firbolg, confessedly the Belgæ of Britain, settled in the south of Ireland, before the Cael, or Caledonians, discovered the north; but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the Firbolg to Ireland happened many centuries before the Christian æra.

The poem of Temora throws considerable light on this subject. The accounts given in it agree so well with what the ancients have delivered concerning the first population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiassed person will confess them more probable than the legends handed down, by tradition, in that country. It appears, that, in the days of Rathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was possessed by two nations; the Firbolg or Belgæ of Britain, who inhabited the south, and the Cael, who passed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulster. The two nations, as is usual among an unpolished and lately settled people, were divided into small dynasties, subject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this situation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the state of the island, until Crothar, lord of Atha, a country in Connaught, the most potent chief of the Firbolg, carried away Conlana, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the Cael, who possessed Ulster.

Conlana had been betrothed some time before to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch resented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppose his progress. Crothar himself then took arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war upon this became general between the two nations; and the Cael were reduced to the last extremity. In this situation, they

applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who sent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulster, was chosen king, by the unanimous consent of the Caledonian tribes, who possessed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and success ; but the Firbolg appear to have been rather repelled than subdued. In succeeding reigns, we learn, from episodes in the same poem, that the chiefs of Atha made several efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To Conar succeeded his son Cormac, who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he seems to have been driven to the last extremity, by an insurrection of the Firbolg, who supported the pretensions of the chiefs of Atha to the Irish throne. Fingal, who was then very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colculla, chief of Atha, and re-established Cormac in the sole possession of all Ireland. It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Roscrana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Ossian.

Cormac was succeeded in the Irish throne by his son, Cairbre ; Cairbre by Artho, his son, who was the father of that Cormac, in whose minority the invasion of Swaran happened, which is the subject of the poem of Fingal. The family of Atha, who had not relinquished their pretensions to the Irish throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this mounted the throne. His usurpation soon ended with his life ; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and restored, after various vicissitudes of fortune, the

family of Conar to the possession of the kingdom. This war is the subject of *Temora*; the events, though certainly heightened and embellished by poetry, seem, notwithstanding, to have their foundation in true history.

*Temora* contains not only the history of the first migration of the Caledonians into Ireland : it also preserves some important facts, concerning the first settlement of the Firbolg, or Belgæ of Britain, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was ancestor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who successively mounted the Irish throne, after the death of Cormac the son of Artho. I forbear to transcribe the passage on account of its length. It is the song of Fonar, the bard ; towards the latter end of the seventh book of *Temora*. As the generations from Larthon to Carthmor, to whom the episode is addressed, are not marked, as are those of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the settlement of the Firbolg. It is, however probable it was some time before the Cael, or Caledonians, settled in Ulster. One important fact may be gathered from this history, that the Irish had no king before the latter end of the first century. Fingal lived, it is supposed, in the third century ; so Conar, the first monarch of the Irish, who was his grand-uncle, cannot be placed farther back than the close of the first. To establish this fact, is to lay, at once, aside the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Irish, and to get quit of the long list of kings which the latter give us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon prior to the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The

true history of Ireland begins somewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware, who was indefatigable in his researches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction, and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Irish, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this consideration, that he begins his history at the introduction of Christianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down concerning the times of paganism were tales of late invention, strangely mixed with anachronisms and inconsistencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected, with uncommon industry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuscripts, concerning the history of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and self-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the last degree, they have disgraced the antiquities they meant to establish.— It is to be wished, that some able Irishman, who understands the language and records of his country, may redeem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of these idle fabulists.

By comparing the history in these poems with the legends of the Scots and Irish writers, and by afterwards examining both by the test of the Roman authors, it is easy to discover which is the most probable. Probability is all that can be established on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypothesis laid down by contemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finishes the figure of which they only drew the outlines, it ought, in the judgment of sober reason, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and distant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the son of Ere or Arceth, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a son of Fingal of that name, who makes a considerable figure in Ossian's poems. The three elder sons of Fingal, Ossian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without issue, the succession, of course, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth son, and his posterity. This Fergus, say some traditions, was the father of Congal, whose son was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the first king of Scots, as it was in his time the Cael, who possessed the western coast of Scotland, began to be distinguished, by foreigners, by the name of Scots. From thenceforward, the Scots and Picts, as distinct nations, became objects of attention to the historians of other countries. The internal state of the two Caledonian kingdoms has always continued, and ever must remain, in obscurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we must fix the beginning of the decay of that species of heroism which subsisted in the days of Fingal. There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The second begins when property is established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government, to which they trust the safety of their persons and property. As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it

with reflection, to a primeval dignity of sentiment. The middle stage is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the second stage, and, consequently, into those circumscribed sentiments which always distinguish barbarity. The events which soon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domestic commotions, entirely forsook Britain, finding it impossible to defend so distant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, seizing this favourable opportunity, made incursions into the deserted province. The Britons, enervated by the slavery of several centuries, and those vices which are inseparable from an advanced state of civility, were not able to withstand the impetuous, though irregular attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmost distress, they applied to their old masters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate state of the empire could not spare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave with the enemies of whom they were so much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themselves considerably towards the south. It is in this period we must place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The seat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the south, to be near the common enemy, in case of sudden incursions. Instead of roving through unfrequented wilds in search of subsistence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raising of corn. This manner of life was the first means of changing the

national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with strangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable that most of the old inhabitants remained. These incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture and other arts, which they themselves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the most predominant, retained still their language, and as many of the customs of their ancestors as suited with the nature of the country they possessed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally descended from the same stock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as similar as the different natures of the countries they possessed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars and other transactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the south of Scotland were alternately possessed by the two nations. They were ceded in the ninth age, to the Scots, and it is probable that most of the Saxon inhabitants remained in possession of their lands. During the several conquests and revolutions in England many fled for refuge into Scotland, to avoid the oppression of foreigners, or the tyranny of domestic usurpers ; insomuch that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottish kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground on the tongue and customs of the ancient Caledonians, till, at last, the latter were entirely restricted to the inhabitants of the mountains, who were still unmix'd with strangers.

It was after the accession of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered, by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions, which, afterwards, sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own regulus, who either was, or, in the succession of a few generations, was regarded as, chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive heaths, and impassable mountains, from the face of the Highlands. In those valleys the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods. they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural seat of the red deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward state of agriculture, the valleys were not unfer-



tile ; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at least the necessaries of life. Here the chief lived, the supreme judge and lawgiver of his own people ; but his sway was neither severe nor unjust. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, so he, in return, considered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though absolute and decisive, partook more of the authority of a father than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was considered as the property of the chief, yet his vassals made him no other consideration for their lands than services, neither burthensome nor frequent. As he seldom went from home, he was at no expense. His table was supplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence, the Highland chiefs lived for many ages. At a distance from the seat of government, and secured by the inaccessibility of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with strangers, the customs of their ancestors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their ancestors, they delighted in traditions and songs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and especially of their own particular families. A succession of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As Fingal and his chiefs were the most renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place them in the genealogy of every great family. They became famous among the people, and an object of fiction and poetry to the bards.

The bards erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their songs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expressions, and the manners they represent, may please those who understand the language; their obscurity and inaccuracy would disgust in a translation. It was chiefly for this reason, that I have rejected wholly the works of the bards in my publications.—Ossian acted in a more extensive sphere, and his ideas ought to be more noble and universal; neither gives he, I presume, so many of their peculiarities, which are only understood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in this species of composition. Their rhymes, only calculated to kindle a martial spirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleasure to genuine taste. This observation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every inferior species of poetry they are more successful. They express the tender melancholy of desponding love, with simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local to be admired in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the

scenes they describe, they must afford pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of their description and sentiment, that, probably, has kept them in the obscurity of an almost lost language. The ideas of an unpolished period are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required to relish them as they deserve. Those who alone are capable of transferring ancient poetry into a modern language, might be better employed in giving originals of their own, were it not for that wretched envy and meanness which affects to despise contemporary genius. My first publication was merely accidental. Had I then met with less approbation, my after-pursuits would have been more profitable; at least I might have continued to be stupid, without being branded with dulness.

These poems may furnish light to antiquaries, as well as some pleasure to the lovers of poetry. The first population of Ireland, its first kings, and several circumstances, which regard its connection of old with the south and north of Britain, are presented in several episodes. The subject and catastrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the first peopling of that country, and the contests between the two British nations, who originally inhabited that island. In a preceding part of this Dissertation, I have shown how superior the probability of this system is to the undigested fictions of the Irish bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Irish and Scottish historians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have

all along expressed my doubts concerning the veracity and abilities of those who deliver down their ancient history. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, arising from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obscure antiquity. No kingdom now established in Europe can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, inconsiderable as it may appear in other respects, even according to my system, so that it is altogether needless to fix its origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since the first publication of these poems, many insinuations have been made, and doubts arisen, concerning their authenticity. Whether these suspicions are suggested by prejudice, or are only the effects of malice, I neither know nor care. Those who have doubted my veracity, have paid a compliment to my genius; and were even the allegation true, my self-denial might have atoned for my fault. Without vanity I say it, I think I could write tolerable poetry; and I assure my antagonists, that I should not translate what I could not imitate.

As prejudice is the effect of ignorance, I am not surprised at its being general. An age that produces few marks of genius ought to be sparing of admiration. The truth is, the bulk of mankind have ever been led by reputation more than taste, in articles of literature. If all the Romans who admired Virgil understood his beauties, he would have scarce deserved to have come down to us through so many centuries. Unless genius were in fashion, Homer himself might have written in vain. He that wishes to come with weight on the superficial, must skim the surface, in their own shallow way. Were my

aim to gain the many, I would write a madrigal sooner than an heroic poem. Laberius himself would be always sure of more followers than Sophocles.

Some who doubt the authenticity of this work, with peculiar acuteness appropriate them to the Irish nation. Though it is not easy to conceive how these poems can belong to Ireland and to me at once, I shall examine the subject, without further animadversion on the blunder.

Of all the nations descended from the ancient Celtæ, the Scots and Irish are the most similar in language, customs, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote descent from the great Celtic stock. It is evident in short, that, at some period or other, they formed one society, were subject to the same government, and were, in all respects, one and the same people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother nation, I have in another work amply discussed. The first circumstance that induced me to disregard the vulgarly received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation, was my observations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, spoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother-language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now spoken, or even that which has been written for some centuries back, amongst the most unmixed part of the Irish nation. A Scotchman, tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the Galic of North Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand, without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in

the Galic tongue. This affords a proof, that the Scotch Galic is the most original, and, consequently, the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Irish, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, seem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they speak. They call their own language *Caelic Eirinarach*, i. e. Caledonian Irish, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britain a *Chaelic*, or the Caledonian tongue, emphatically. A circumstance of this nature tends more to decide which is the most ancient nation than the united testimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and senachies, who, perhaps, never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till some one of them, more learned than the rest, discovered, that the Romans called the first Iberia, and the latter Hibernia. On such a slight foundation were probably built the romantic fictions, concerning the Milesians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it sufficiently appears, that the poems published under the name of Ossian, are not of Irish composition. The favourite chimera, that Ireland is the mother-country of the Scots, is totally subverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of successive senachies and fileas, are found at last, to be the spurious brood of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are of their pretended Ibernian descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems, so subversive of their system, could never be produced by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the

language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's *Paradise Lost* could be wrote by a Scotch peasant, as to suppose, that the poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems, concerning the Fion, or the heroes of Fion Mac Commal. This Fion, say the Irish analists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned that Ireland had an embodied militia so early, is not so easy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems concerning Fion. I have just now in my hands all that remain of those compositions; but unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, afford striking proofs that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusion to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches, and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated Fion could scarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician.—Witches on broomsticks, were continually hovering round him, like crows, and he had freed enchanted virgins, in every valley in Ireland. In short, Fion, great as he was, passed a disagreeable life. Not only

had he to engage all the mischiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, assisted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings, as tall as the mainmast of a first-rate. It must be owned, however, that Fion was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air Cromleach, druim-ard,  
 Chos eile air Crom-meal dubh,  
 Thoga Fion le lamh mhoir  
 An d'uisge o Lubhair na fruth.

With one foot on Cromleach his brow,  
 The other on Crommal the dark,  
 Fion took up with his large hand  
 The water from Lubar of the streams.

Cromleach and Crommal were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulster, and the river Lubar ran through the intermediate valley. The property of such a monster as this Fion, I should never have disputed with any nation. But the bard himself, in the poem from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

Fion o Albin, siol nan laioch !

Fion from Albin, race of heroes !

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this distance of time, I should have given as my opinion, that this enormous Fion was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or some other celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whose inhabitants, now at least, are not remarkable for their stature. As for the poetry, I leave it to the reader.

If Fion was so remarkable for his stature, his heroes had also other extraordinary properties. 'In



weight all the sons of strangers yielded to the celebrated Ton-iosal; and for hardness of skull, and, perhaps, for thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood 'unrivalled and alone.' Ossian himself had many singular and less delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuthullin was of so diminutive a size, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illustrate this subject, I shall here lay before the reader, the history of some of the Irish poems, concerning Fion Mac Comhal. A translation of these pieces, if well executed, might afford satisfaction, in an uncommon way, to the public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth from obscurity the poems of my own country, has wasted all the time I had allotted for the Muses; besides, I am too diffident of my own abilities to undertake such a work. A gentleman in Dublin accused me to the public, of committing blunders and absurdities, in translating the language of my own country, and that before any translation of mine appeared. How the gentleman came to see my blunders before I committed them is not easy to determine; if he did not conclude, that, as a Scotsman, and, of course, descended of the Milesian race, I might have committed some of those oversights, which, perhaps very unjustly, are said to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Irish poems, concerning the Fionia, it appears, that Fion Mac Comhal flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed, by the universal consent of the senachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his son Ossian is made contemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the gospel in

Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Ossian, though, at that time, he must have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become wife to the saint. On account of this family connection, 'Patrick of the Psalms,' for so the apostle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Ossian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The saint sometimes threw off the austerity of his profession, drank freely, and had his soul properly warmed with wine, to receive with becoming enthusiasm the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of useful information :

Lo don rabh Padric ha muhr,  
 Gun Sailm air uidh, ach a gol,  
 Ghluais e thigh Ossian mhic Fhion,  
 O san leis bu bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is 'Teantach mor na Fiona.' It appears to have been founded on the same story with the 'Battle of Lora.' The circumstances and catastrophe in both are much the same; but the Irish Ossian discovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky anachronism. After describing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, that none of the foe escaped, but a few, who were permitted to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade, for it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so ancient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called,

Rioch Lochlin an do shloigh,  
King of Denmark of two nations—

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumstance which happened under Margaret de Waldemar, in the close of the fourteenth age. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating Fion, or Fingal, to themselves. He concludes the poem with this reflection :

Na fagha se comhthrom nan n' arm,  
Erragon Mac Annir nan lan glas  
'San n' Albin ni n' abairtair Triath  
Agus ghlaoite an n' Fhiona as.

“ Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords, avoided the equal contest of arms (single combat), no chief should have been afterwards numbered in Albion, and the heroes of Fion should no more be named.”

The next poem that falls under our observation is “ Cath-cabhra,” or, “ The Death of Oscar.” This piece is founded on the same story which we have in the first book of Temora. So little thought the author of Cath-cabhra of making Oscar his countryman, that, in the course of two hundred lines, of which the poem consists, he puts the following expression thrice in the mouth of the hero :

Albin an sa d' roina m'arach.—

Albion, where I was born and bred.

The poem contains almost all the incidents in the first book of Temora. In one circumstance the bard

differs materially from Ossian. Oscar after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a prospect of the sea. A fleet appeared at a distance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo shean-athair at' an  
'S iad o tiähd le cabhair chugain,  
O Albin na n' ioma stuagh.

“ It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from Albion of many waves !” The testimony of this bard is sufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O’Flagherty ; for, though he is far from being ancient, it is probable he flourished a full century before these historians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Christian than chronologer : for Fion, though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the soul of his grandson to his Redeemer.

‘ Duan a Gharibh Mac-Starn is another Irish poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of sentiment, might have induced me to give a translation of it, had not I some expectations which are now over, of seeing it in the collection of the Irish Ossian’s Poems, promised twelve years since to the public. The author descends sometimes from the region of the sublime to low and indecent description : the last of which the Irish translator, no doubt, will choose to leave in the obscurity of the original. In this piece Cuthullin is used with very little ceremony, for he is oft called the ‘ dog of Tara,’ in the county of Meath. This severe title of the redoubtable Cuthullin, the most renowned of Irish champions, proceeded from the poet’s

ignorance of etymology. *Cu*, 'voice,' or commander, signifies also a dog. The poet chose the last, as the most noble appellation for his hero.

The subject of the poem is the same with that of the epic poem of Fingal. Caribh Mac-Starn is the same with Ossian's Swaran, the son of Starno. His single combats with, and his victory over, all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the 'celebrated dog of Tara,' i. e. Cuthullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. Caribh's progress in search of Cuthullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuthullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls 'the guiding star of the women of Ireland.' The property of this enormous lady I shall not dispute with him, or any other. But, as he speaks with great tenderness of the 'daughters of the convent,' and throws out some hints against the English nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuthullin.

Another Irish Ossian, for there are many, as appears from their difference in language and sentiment, speaks very dogmatically of Fion Mac-Com-nal, as an Irishman. Little can be said for the judgment of this poet, and less for his delicacy of sentiment. The history of one of his episodes may, at once, stand as a specimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of Fion, happened to be threatened with an invasion by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needless to insist upon the impropriety of a French invasion of Ireland; it is sufficient for me to be faithful

to the language of my author. Fion, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invasion, sent Ca-olt, Ossian, and Oscar, to watch the bay, in which it was apprehended the enemy was to land. Oscar was the worst choice of a scout that could be made, for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post, nor was it possible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of waking him, and they, at last, fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gan,  
 Agus a n'aighai' chiean gun bhuail:  
 Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

“Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone rebounded and rolled away.” Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage on his enemies, which he did to so good purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-iosal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-iosal, though brave, was so heavy and unwieldy, that when he sat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to set him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared, and he gave so good an account of them, that Fion, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the spoil among his soldiers.

All these extraordinary heroes, Fion, Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, says the poet, were

Siol Erin na gorm lann.

The sons of Erin of blue steel.

Neither shall I much dispute the matter with him : he has my consent also to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated Tonois-sal. I shall only say, that they are different persons from those of the same name, in the Scots poems ; and that, though the stupendous valour of the first is so remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is somewhat extraordinary, that Fion, who lived some ages before St. Patrick, swears like a very good Christian :

Air an Dia do chum gach case.

By God, who shaped every case.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, Ossian, who lived in St. Patrick's days, seems to have understood something of the English, a language not then subsisting. A person, more sanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue from this circumstance, that this pretendedly Irish Ossian was a native of Scotland ; for my countrymen are universally allowed to have an exclusive right to the second-sight.

From the instances given the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the Fion. The greatest part of them make the heroes of Fion,

Siol Albin a n'nioma caoile.

The race of Albion of many friths.

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side. From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that the language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to show, how the Irish bards began to appropriate the Scottish Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or, at least, paid little regard to the government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship, with the English. The similarity of manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the same enemy, created a free and friendly intercourse between the Scottish and Irish nations. As the custom of retaining bards and senachies was common to both; so each, no doubt, had formed a system of history, it matters not how much soever fabulous, concerning their respective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together; and if possible to deduce them from the same original stock.



The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progress in the south of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional history of the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from several concurring circumstances, into the last degree of ignorance and barbarism. The Irish, who, for some ages before the conquest, had possessed a competent share of that kind of learning which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impose their own fictions on the ignorant Highland senachies. By flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long list of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, assumed to themselves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was established that Hibernian system of the origin of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was universally received. The Scots of the low country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it, their national traditions, received, implicitly, the history of their country, from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over to the Hibernian system.

These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact, of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestable is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion, by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own na-

tional traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scotch nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from falling to the ground so improbable a story.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued further than it deserves: but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems, concerning the Fiona, should appear ridiculous, it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations at that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland have displayed a genius for poetry. It was alone in matters of antiquity, that they were monstrous in their fables. Their love-sonnets, and their elegies on the death of persons worthy or renowned, abound with simplicity, and a wild harmony of numbers. They become more than an atonement for their errors, in every other species of poetry. But the beauty of these species depends so much on a certain *curiosa felicitas* of expression in the original, that they must appear much to disadvantage in another language.

A  
CRITICAL DISSERTATION  
ON  
THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient state of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or songs. History when it treats of remote or dark ages, is seldom very instructive. The beginnings of society, in every country, are involved in fabulous confusion ; and though they were not, they would furnish few events worth recording. But, in every period of society, human manners are a curious spectacle ; and the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. These present to us, what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford—the history of human imagination and passion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow creatures in the most artless ages : discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before

those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind.

Besides this merit, which ancient poems have with philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They produce some of the highest beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpolished we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding at the same time with that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry: for many circumstances of those times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical spirit. That state in which human nature looks wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and passion.

In the infancy of societies, men lived scattered and dispersed, in the midst of solitary rural scenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprise are frequently excited: and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost: their passions have nothing to restrain them, their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise, and converse and act in the uncovered simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours: which of course renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influ-

ence of imagination and passion over the form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society. Figures are commonly considered as artificial modes of speech, devised by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined state. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have used so many figures of stile, as in those rude ages, when, besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper and precise terms for the ideas they would express, obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold and metaphorical style, than a modern European would adventure to use in an epic poem.

In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination, less. Fewer objects occur that are new or surprising. Men apply themselves to trace the causes of things; they correct and refine one another; they subdue or disguise their passions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform standard of politeness and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and at the same time from fervour and enthusiasm, to correctness and precision. Style becomes more chaste, but less animated. The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The

powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth ; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not to their maturity till the imagination begins to flag. Hence poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their liveliness and vivacity ; so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.

Poetry has been said to be more ancient than prose : and however paradoxical such an assertion may seem, yet, in a qualified sense, it is true. Men certainly never conversed with one another in regular numbers ; but even their ordinary language would in ancient times, for the reasons before assigned, approach to a poetical style ; and the first compositions transmitted to posterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal sense, poems ; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone. Music or song has been found coeval with society among the most barbarous nations. The only subjects which could prompt men, in their first rude state, to utter their thoughts in compositions of any length, were such as naturally assumed the tone of poetry ; praises of their gods, or their ancestors ; commemorations of their own warlike exploits ; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compositions, except songs or poems, could take such hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preserved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations; and divert into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring. What we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the east, is probably no more oriental than accidental: it is characteristical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof.

Our present subject leads us to investigate the ancient poetical remains, not so much of the east, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the northern nations; in order to discover whether the Gothic poetry has any resemblance to the Celtic or Gaelic, which we are about to consider. Though the Goths, under which name we usually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earliest times, had their poets and their songs. Their

poets were distinguished by the title of Scalders, and their songs were termed Vyses. Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian of considerable note, who flourished in the thirteenth century, informs us, that very many of these songs, containing the ancient traditionary stories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character, several of which he has translated into Latin, and inserted into his History. But his versions are plainly so paraphrastical, and forced into such an imitation of the style and the measure of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native spirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preserved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Literatura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral song, composed by Regner Lodbrog; and translated by Olaus, word for word from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the same time an eminent scald or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at last into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into prison and condemned to be destroyed by serpents. In this situation he so-laced himself with rehearsing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine stanzas, of ten lines each; and every stanza begins with these words, *Pugnāvimus ensibus*, We have fought with our swords. Olaus's version is in many places so obscure as to be hardly intelligible. I have subjoined the whole below, exactly as he has published it\*; and shall translate as much as may give the English reader an idea of the spirit and strain of this kind of poetry.

\* See the Note at the end of the Dissertation.



“ We have fought with our swords. I was young, when, towards the east, in the bay of Oreon, we made torrents of blood flow, to gorge the ravenous beast of prey, and the yellow-footed bird. There resounded the hard steel upon the lofty helmets of men. The whole ocean was one wound. The crow waded in the blood of the slain. When we had numbered twenty years, we lifted our spears on high, and every where spread our renown. Eight barons we overcame in the east, before the port of Diminum; and plentifully we feasted the eagle in that slaughter. The warm stream of wounds run into the ocean. The army fell before us. When we steered our ships into the mouth of the Vistula, we sent the Helsingians to the hall of Odin. Then did the sword bite. The waters were all one wound. The earth was dyed red with the warm stream. The sword rung upon the coats of mail, and clove the bucklers in twain. None fled on that day, till among his ships Heraudus fell. Than him no braver baron cleaves the sea with ships; a cheerful heart did he ever bring to the combat. Then the host threw away their shields, when the uplifted spear flew at the breast of heroes. The sword bit the Scarfian rocks; bloody was the shield in battle, until Rafno the king was slain. From the heads of warriors the warm sweat streamed down their armour. The crows around the Indirian islands had an ample prey. It were difficult to single out one among so many deaths. At the rising of the sun I beheld the spears piercing the bodies of foes, and the bows throwing forth their steel-pointed arrows. Loud roared the swords in the plain of Lano.—The virgins long bewailed the slaughter of that morning.”—In this strain

the poet continues to describe several other military exploits. The images are not much varied: the noise of arms, the streaming of blood, and the feasting the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two of his sons in battle; and the lamentation he describes as made for one of them is very singular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins or nymphs of the wood bewailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, says our Gothic poet, "When Rogvaldus was slain, for him mourned all the hawks of heaven," as lamenting a benefactor who had so liberally supplied them with prey; for boldly," as he adds, "in the strife of swords, did the breaker of helmets throw the spear of blood."

The poem concludes with sentiments of the highest bravery and contempt of death. "What is more certain to the brave man than death, though amidst the storm of swords he stands always ready to oppose it? He only regrets this life who hath never known distress. The timorous man allures the devouring eagle to the field of battle. The coward, wherever he comes, is useless to himself. This I esteem honourable, that the youth should advance to the combat fairly matched one against another; nor man retreat from man. Long was this the warrior's highest glory. He who aspires to the love of virgins, ought always to be foremost in the roar of arms. It appears to me, of truth, that we are led by the Fates. Seldom can any overcome the appointment of destiny. Little did I foresee that Ella was to have my life in his hands, in that day when fainting I concealed my blood, and pushed forth my ships into the waves, after we had spread a repast for the beasts of

prey throughout the Scottish bays. But this makes me always rejoice, that in the walls of our father Balder (or Odin) I know there are seats prepared where, in a short time, we shall be drinking ale out of the hollow skulls of our enemies. In the house of the mighty Odin, no brave man laments death. I come not with the voice of despair to Odin's hall.—How eagerly would all the sons of Aslauga now rush to war, did they know the distress of their father, whom a multitude of venomous serpents tear! I have given to my children a mother who hath filled their hearts with valour. I am fast approaching to my end. A cruel death awaits me from the viper's bite. A snake dwells in the midst of my heart. I hope that the sword of some of my sons shall yet be stained with the blood of Ella. The valiant youths will wax red with anger, and will not sit in peace. Fifty and one times have I reared the standard in battle. In my youth I learned to dye the sword in blood: my hope was then, that no king amoag men would be more renowned than me. The goddesses of death will now soon call me; I must not mourn my death. Now I end my song. The goddesses invite me away; they whom Odin has sent to me from his hall. I will sit upon a lofty seat, and drink ale joyfully with the goddesses of death. The hours of my life are run out. I will smile when I die."

This is such poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a most ferocious spirit. It is wild, harsh, and irregular; but at the same time animated and strong; the style, in the original full of inversions, and, as we learn from some of Olaus's notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Ossian, a very

different scene presents itself. There we find the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominant over fierceness and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the softest feelings, and at the same time elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Ossian, it is like passing from a savage desert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illustrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether distinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the west of Europe, but seem to have had their most full and complete establishment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the institution of which two orders was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The Druids were their philosophers and priests; the Bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions; and both these orders of men seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial. We must not therefore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a gross and rude nation. They possessed from very

remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and lasting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this express testimony, that there flourished among them the study of the most laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whose office it was to sing in heroic verse the gallant actions of illustrious men; and by the Druids, who lived together in colleges, or societies, after the Pythagorean manner, and philosophising upon the highest subjects, asserted the immortality of the human soul. Though Julius Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does not expressly mention the Bards, yet it is plain, that under the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the Bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that, according to his account, the Druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds too, that such as were to be initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race.

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek Rhapsodists, in Homer's times, but

as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar; and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known that in both these countries, every regulus or chief had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court: and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending chiefs; and their persons were held sacred. 'Cairbar feared to stretch his sword to the bards, though his soul was dark.'—'Loose the bards,' said his brother Cathmor, 'they are the sons of other times. Their voice shall be heard in other ages, when the kings of Temora have failed.'

From all this, the Celtic tribe clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at first sight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it excludes polished manners, it is, however, not inconsistent with generous sentiments and tender affections.—What degree of friendship, love, and heroism, may

possibly he found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say, Astonishing instances of them we know, from history, have sometimes appeared ; and a few characters distinguished by those high qualities, might lay a foundation for a set of manners being introduced into the songs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the usual poetical licence, and the real manners of the country.

In particular, with respect to heroism ; the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and sing the praises, of heroes. So *Lucan* :

Vos quoque qui fortes animos. belloque peremptos,  
Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum  
Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardî.

*Phars. I. 1.*

Now when we consider a college or order of men who, cultivating poetry throughout a long series of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroism ; who had all the poems and panegyrics which were composed by their predecessors, handed down to them with care ; who rivalled and endeavoured to outstrip those who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero ; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their songs with the highest lustre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble ? Some of the qualities indeed which distinguish a *Fingal*, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the first ideas of heroism occurring to a barbarous people: but no sooner had such ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representations of human perfection, they would

seized and embraced ; they would enter into their panegyrics ; they would afford materials for succeeding bards to work upon and improve ; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For such songs as these, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and, throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment, must have had a very considerable influence in propagating among them real manners, nearly approaching to the poetical ; and in forming even such a hero as Fingal. Especially when we consider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which, in a savage state, man could obtain over man, the chief was fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the songs of bards.

Having made these remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I shall next consider the particular advantages which Ossian possessed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I just now mentioned of traditional poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other ancestors of Fingal, are spoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable passage Ossian describes himself as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the songs of bards : and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. " His words," says he, " came only by halves to our ears : they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose." Ossian himself appears to have been



endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart ; prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius ; and susceptible equally of strong and of soft emotions. He was not only a professed bard, educated with care, as we may easily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he shows us himself, in intimate friendship with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior also ; and the son of the most renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumstances uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged ; he sings of battles in which he had fought and overcome ; he had beheld the most illustrious scenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroism in war, and magnificence in peace. For, however rude the magnificence of those times may seem to us, we must remember, that all ideas of magnificence are comparative, and that the age of Fingal was an æra of distinguished splendor in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a considerable territory, he was enriched with the spoils of the Roman province : he was ennobled by his victories and great actions ; and was in all respects a personage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of clans, who lived in the same country, after a more extensive monarchy was established.

The manners of Ossian's age, so far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two dispiriting vices to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetousness and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They

lived a roving indolent life ; hunting and war their principal employments ; and their chief amusements, the music of bards and “ the feast of shells.” The great objects pursued by heroic spirits, was “ to receive their fame :” that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards ; and “ to have their names on the four grey stones.” To die unlamented by a bard, was deemed so great a misfortune as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. “ They wander in thick mists beside the reedy lake ; but never shall they rise, without the song, to the dwelling of winds. After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth ; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry had been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder that, among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise ; a man who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting, in the course of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages ?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and

earliest is the life of hunters ; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root ; next agriculture ; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society ; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring subsistence. Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown ; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce ; but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many ; and of agriculture we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned, except that of navigation and of working in iron. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners. At their feasts, the heroes prepared their own repast ; they sat round the light of the burning oak ; the wind lifted their locks, and whistled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the necessities of life was known to them only as the spoil of the Roman province ; " the gold of the stranger ; the lights of the stranger ; the steeds of the stranger ; the children of the rein."

This representation of Ossian's times, must strike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherson has preserved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are represented as passing the evening in the house of a chief, and each of them separately giving his description of the night.—The night scenery is beautiful ; and the author has plainly imitated the style and manner of Ossian : but he has allowed some images to appear

which betray a later period of society. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows seeking shelter, the shepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the shocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempest.—Whereas, in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent ; no modern allusion drops from him ; but every where the same face of rude nature appears ; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. “ The desert,” says Fingal, “ is enough for me, with all its woods and deer.”

The circle of ideas and transactions is no wider than suits such an age ; nor any greater diversity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally display. Valour and bodily strength are the admired qualities. Contentions arise, as is usual among savage nations, from the slightest causes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feast, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force ; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, rise to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of sentiment, indeed, on several occasions, but none of manners. They speak of their past actions with freedom, boast of their exploits, and sing their own praise. In their battles, it is evident, that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or used. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but striking a shield, or raising a loud cry ; and hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned as a necessary

qualification of a general; like the *Βοήν ἀγαθόν* *Μήτιν* of Homer. Of military discipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their armies seem not to have been numerous; their battles were disorderly; and terminated, for the most part, by a personal combat, or wrestling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard sung the song of peace, and the battle ceased along the field."

The manner of composition bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of composition were more studied and known; but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise, even to abruptness, and leaving several circumstances to be supplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative cast, which, as I before showed, partly a glowing and undisciplined imagination, partly the sterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early speech of nations; and, in several respects, it carries a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament. It deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms, or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works. The ideas of men, at first, were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequences of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly, almost never expresses himself in the abstract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he saw around him. A

public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized; it is the hill of Cronla, the storm of the sea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expression, which, while it is characteristical of ancient ages, is at the same time highly favourable to descriptive poetry. For the same reasons, personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects, such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications which are so familiar to later poets, of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age.

All these are remarks so undoubted, and some of them too so nice and delicate, of the most early times, as put the highest antiquity of these poems out of question. Especially when we consider, that if there had been any imposture in the case, it must have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as up to this period, both by manuscripts, and by the testimony of a multitude of living witnesses, concerning the uncontrovertible tradition of these poems, they can clearly be traced. Now this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a composition of this kind, which it may not be supposed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thousand years before. To suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the High-

lands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind, and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society ancients by a thousand years; one who could support this counterfeited antiquity through such a large collection of poems, without the least inconsistency; and who, possessed of all this genius and art, had at the same time the self-denial of concealing himself, and of ascribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the imposture being detected: is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, besides, two other circumstances to be attended to, still of greater weight, if possible, against this hypothesis. One is, the total absence of religious ideas from this work; for which the translator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Ossian. The druidical superstition was, in the days of Ossian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reasons odious to the family of Fingal; whilst the Christian faith was not yet established. But had it been the work of one to whom the ideas of Christianity were familiar from his infancy: and who had superadded to them also the bigotted superstition of a dark age and country; it is impossible but in some passage or other the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumstance is, the entire silence which reigns with respect to all the great clans or families which are now established in the Highlands. The origin of these several clans is

known to be very ancient ; and it is as well known, that there is no passion by which a native Highlander is more distinguished than by attachment to his clan, and jealousy for his honour. That a Highland bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, should have inserted no circumstance which pointed out the rise of his own clan, which ascertained its antiquity, or increased its glory, is, of all suppositions that can be formed, the most improbable ; and the silence on this head amounts to a demonstration, that the author lived before any of the present great clans were formed or known.

Assuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems now under consideration are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity, I proceed to make some remarks upon their general spirit and strain. The two characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind ; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole. Ossian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing strain ; which I readily admit to be no small advantage to him with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key-note is struck at the beginning, and supported to the end ; nor is any ornament introduced, but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded are all serious and grave ; the scenery throughout wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea-shore ; the mountain shaded with mist ; the torrent



rushing through a solitary valley ; the scattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss ; all produce a solemn attention on the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian an imagination that sports itself, and dresses out gay trifles to please the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, the poetry of the heart. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions ; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy ; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern poets, to please readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flourished ; to recall the affecting incidents of his life ; to dwell upon his past wars, and loves, and friendships : till, as he expresses it himself, “ there comes a voice to Ossian, and awakes his soul. It is the voice of years that are gone ; they roll before me with all their deeds ;” and under this true poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever pleasing voice of nature.

——— *Arte, natura potentior omni.* ——

*Est Deus in Nobis, agitante ealescimus illo.*

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian's writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets to whom we are most accustomed ; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery ; the mind

is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most.

As Homer is, of all the great poets, the one whose manner, and whose time, come the nearest to Ossian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. The Greek has, in several points, a manifest superiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he possesses a larger compass of ideas; has more diversity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of these particulars Ossian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flourishing; laws instituted; order, discipline, and arts, begun. His field of observation was much larger and more splendid; his knowledge, of course, more extensive; his mind also, it shall be granted, more penetrating. But if Ossian's ideas and objects be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry: the bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachment of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be

few, the undissipated mind broods over them more : they strike the imagination, and fire the passions, in a higher degree : and of consequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered though the wide circle of a more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and sprightly poet than Ossian. You discern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Ossian uniformly maintains the gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great measure to be accounted for from the different situations in which they lived, partly personal, and partly national. Ossian had survived all his friends, and was disposed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But, besides this, cheerfulness is one of the many blessings which we owe to formed society. The solitary wild state is always a serious one. Bating the sudden and violent bursts of mirth, which sometimes break forth at their dances and feasts, the savage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be also remarked in Ossian. On all occasions he is frugal of his words : and never gives you more of an image, or a description, than is just sufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his descriptions ; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumstances. Both the poets are dramatic ; that is, they introduce their personages frequently speaking before us. But Ossian is concise and rapid in his speeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had also some portion of the Greek loquacity. His speeches indeed are highly

characteristical: and to them we are much indebted for that admirable display he has given of human nature. Yet, if he be tedious any where, it is in these: some of them are trifling; and some of them plainly unseasonable. Both poets are eminently sublime; but a difference may be marked in the species of their sublimity. Homer's sublimity is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates, and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is most sublime in actions and battles; Ossian in description and sentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chooses to exert it, has great power; but Ossian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderness far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to seize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is, indeed, a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.

After these general observations on the genius and spirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view and more accurate examination of his works: and as Fingal is the first great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuse the title of an epic poem to Fingal, because it is not, in every little particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even

according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment on finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But, guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation he deduced the rules of which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer. Homer and Ossian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action, which is the ground-work of the poem, should be one, complete, and great; that it should be feigned, not merely historical; that it should be enlivened with characters and manners, and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of these, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Bossu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illustrate some moral

truth. The poet, says this critic, must begin with fixing on some maxim or instruction which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æsop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus settled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary history for names and incidents, to give his fable some air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may safely pronounce, that he who should compose an epic poem after this manner, who should first lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his personages and actors, might deliver indeed very sound instruction, but will find few readers. There cannot be the least doubt, that the first object which strikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or subject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any subject, a poet can choose for such a work, but will afford some general moral instruction. An epic poem is, by its nature, one of the most moral of all poetical compositions; but its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to some common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the story. It arises from the admiration of heroic actions, which such a composition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raise, whilst we read it; from the happy impression which all the parts separately, as well as the whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be still insisted on, Fingal obviously furnishes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That wisdom and bravery always triumphs over brutal force; or another nobler still; That the most

complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generosity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the epic action, which, of all Aristotle's rules, is the chief and most material, is so strictly preserved in *Fingal*, that it must be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what arises from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic justly censures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterprise, the deliverance of Ireland from the invasion of Swaran; an enterprise, which has surely the full heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a constant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole; and as the action is one and great, so it is an entire or complete action. For we find, as the critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end: a nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuthullin's rashness and bad success; those difficulties gradually surmounted; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to epic poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in *Fingal*, than in almost any other epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The Autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action; and from beginning to end the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in *Fingal*, is much shorter than in the *Iliad* or *Æneid*, but sure there may be shorter as well as longer heroic poems; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly that the epic composition is indefinite as to the time

of its duration. Accordingly the action of the *Iliad* lasts only forty-seven days, whilst that of the *Æneid* is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of *Fingal*, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

Semper ad eventum festinat, et in dedias res,  
Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit—  
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ad ovo.

*De Arte Poet.*

He invokes no muse, for he acknowledged none; but his occasional addresses to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muse. He sets out with no formal proposition of his subject; but the subject naturally and easily unfolds itself; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the situation of Cuthullin, and the arrival of a scout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is presently made of *Fingal*, and the expected assistance from the ships of the lonely isle, in order to give further light to the subject. For the poet often shows his address in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of *Fingal*, the previous expectations that are raised, and the extreme magnificence, fully answering these expectations, with which the hero is at length presented to us, are all worked up with such skilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the most refined times. Homer's art in magnifying



the character of Achilles has been universally admired. Ossian certainly shows no less art in aggrandising Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpose than the whole management of the last battle, wherein Gaul, the son of Morni, had besought Fingal to retire, and to leave to him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generosity of the king in agreeing to this proposal; the majesty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his sword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but, from unwillingness to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in person to their assistance, first sending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at last, when the danger becomes more pressing, his rising in his might, and interposing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumstances contrived with so much art, as plainly discover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractised in heroic poetry.

The story which is the foundation of the *Iliad* is in itself as simple as that of Fingal. A quarrel arises between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female slave; on which Achilles, apprehending himself to be injured, withdraws his assistance from the rest of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great distress, and beseech him to be reconciled to them. He refuses to fight for them in person, but sends his friend Patroclus: and upon his being slain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The subject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuthullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for assistance to Fingal, who reigned in the

opposite coast of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by rash counsel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and desponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for some time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once saved his life, makes him dismiss him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his story with a much greater variety of particulars than Ossian; and in this has shown a compass of invention superior to that of the other poet. But it must not be forgotten, that, though Homer be more circumstantial, his incidents however are less diversified in kind than those of Ossian. War and bloodshed reign throughout the *Iliad*; and, notwithstanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is so much uniformity in his subjects, that there are few readers, who, before the close, are not tired with perpetual fighting. Whereas in Ossian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diversity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroism, with love and friendship, of martial with tender scenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The episodes too have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: consisting of the songs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. These songs are not introduced at random: if you except the episode of Duchom-mar and Morna, in the first book, which, though beautiful, is more unartful than any of the rest; they have always some particular relation to the actor who is interested, or to the events which

are going on ; and, whilst they vary the scene, they preserve a sufficient connexion with the main subject by the fitness and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca influences some circumstances of the poem, particularly the honourable dismissal of Swaran at the end ; it was necessary that we should be let into this part of the hero's story. But as it lay without the compass of the present action, it could be regularly introduced nowhere, except in an episode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety as if Aristotle himself had directed the plan, has contrived an episode for this purpose in the song of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The conclusion of the poem is strictly according to rule ; and is every way noble and pleasing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the consolation of Cuthullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, sooth the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that passage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repose, which critics require as the proper termination of the epic work. " Thus they passed the night in song, and brought back the morning with joy. Fingal arose on the heath ; and shook his glittering spear in his hand. He moved first towards the plains of Lena ; and we followed like a ridge of fire. Spread the sail, said the king of Morven, and catch the winds that pour from Lena. We rose on the wave with songs : and rushed with joy through the foam of the ocean." So much for the unity and general conduct of the epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the subject which Aristotle requires, that it should be feigned, not historical, he must not be understood so strictly as

if he meant to exclude all subjects which have any foundation in truth. For such exclusion would both be unreasonable in itself, and, what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his *Iliad* on historical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Aristotle means no more than that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and useful fictions; to copy nature, as he himself explains it, like painters who preserve a likeness, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Ossian has followed this course, and, building upon true history, has sufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be questioned by most readers. At the same time, the foundation which those facts and characters had in truth, and the share which the poet himself had in the transactions which he records, must be considered as no small advantage to his work. For truth makes an impression on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever so strong, relates any events so feelingly as those in which he has been interested; paints any scene so naturally as one which he has seen; or draws any characters in such strong colours as those which he has personally known. It is considered as an advantage of the epic subject to be taken from a period so distant, as by being involved in the darkness of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Ossian's subject may at first view appear unfavourable in this respect, as being taken from his own times, yet, when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old

age ; that he relates what had been transacted in another country, at the distance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the stage ; we shall find the objection in a great measure obviated. In so rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was loose, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural representation of human characters in an epic poem is highly essential to its merit, and in respect of this, there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Ossian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at least, if not superior, to Virgil ; and has indeed given all the display of human nature, which the simple occurrences of his times could be expected to furnish. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal ; but, on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly distinguished, but sometimes artfully contrasted, so as to illustrate each other. Ossian's heroes are like Homer's, all brave ; but their bravery, like those of Homer's too is of different kinds. For instance, the prudent, the sedate, the modest, and circumspect Connal, is finely opposed to the presumptuous, rash, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuthullin into action by his temerity ; and when he sees the bad effects of his counsels, he will not survive the disgrace. Connal, like another Ulysses, attends Cuthullin to his retreat, counsels and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-spirited Swaran, is admirably contrasted with

the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oscar is a favourite one throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior ; his eager impetuosity in the day of action ; his passion for fame ; his submission to his father ; his tenderness for Malvina ; are the strokes of a masterly pencil : the strokes are few ; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Ossian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us, through the whole work, a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuthullin is a hero of the highest class : daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress ; and after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius that he durst adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuthullin should be only an inferior personage ; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuthullin rises above the rest.

Here indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled : for we may boldly defy all antiquity to show us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities : but Hector is a secondary personage in the *Iliad*, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally ; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal ; who not only in this epic poem, but in *Temora*, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is

duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him exulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel taunts, and telling him, when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now ; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the vultures. Whereas in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished, on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes ; full of affection to his children ; full of concern about his friends ; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is the universal protector of the distressed ; "None ever went sad from Fingal."—"O, Oscar! bend the strong in arms ; but spare the feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides against the foes of thy people ; but like the gale that moves the grass, to those who ask thine aid. So Trenmor lived ; such Trathal was ; and such has Fingal been. My arm was the support of the injured ; the weak rested behind the lightning of my steel." These were the maxims of true heroism, to which he formed his grandson. His fame is represented as every where spread ; the greatest heroes acknowledged his superiority ; his enemies tremble at his name ; and the highest encomium that can be bestowed on one whom the poet would most exalt, is to say, that his soul was like the soul of Fingal.

To do justice to the poet's merit, in supporting such a character as this, I must observe, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in such a manner, as to render it distinct and affecting to the mind. Some strokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what usually give us the most clear view, and the most sensible impression of a character; because they present to us a man, such as we have seen; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and describe a faultless hero, they, for the most part, set before us a sort of vague undistinguishable character, such as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itself, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, *Æneas*, is an unanimated insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His *Fingal*, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man; a character which touches and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumstances, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrator of his past exploits; he is venerable with the grey locks of age; he is frequently disposed to moralise, like an old man, on human vanity, and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this



than may at first be imagined. For youth and old age are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which most critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description.—No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world into a fantastic visionary region; and loses that weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws these too much from view, or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some

foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases : he must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives ; so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature.

In these respects, Ossian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the same course with Homer. For it is perfectly absurd to imagine, as some critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in consequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no such refining genius. He found the traditionary stories on which he built his *Iliad*, mingled with popular legends concerning the intervention of the gods ; and he adopted these because they amused the fancy. Ossian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits : it is likely he believed them himself ; and he introduced them, because they gave his poems that solemn and marvellous cast, which suited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety ; because it was the only intervention of supernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy ; because it did not interfere in the least with the proper display of human characters and actions ; because it had less of the incredible, than most other kinds of poetical machinery ; and because it served to diversify the scene, and to heighten the subject by an awful grandeur, which is the great design of machinery.

As Ossian's mythology is peculiar to himself, and makes a considerable figure in his other poems, as

well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make some observations on it, independent of its subserviency to epic composition. It turns, for the most part, on the appearances of departed spirits. These, consonantly to the notions of every rude age, are represented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be visible or invisible at pleasure; their voice is feeble, their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a separate state, they retain the same dispositions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and pursue deer formed of clouds. The ghosts of departed bards continue to sing. The ghosts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They rest together in their caves, and talk of mortal men. Their songs are of other worlds. They come sometimes to the ear of rest, and raise their feeble voice." All this presents to us much the same set of ideas, concerning spirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, where Ulysses visits the regions of the dead; and in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, the ghost of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vanishes precisely like one of Ossian's, emitting a shrill, feeble cry, and melting away like smoke.

But though Homer's and Ossian's ideas concerning ghosts were of the same nature, we cannot but observe, that Ossian's ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier colours than those of Homer. Ossian describes ghosts with all the particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it. He calls up those awful and tremendous ideas which the

— Simulacra modis pallentia miris.

are fitted to raise in the human mind ; and which, in Shakspear's style, " harrow up the soul." Crugal's ghost, in particular, in the beginning of the second book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, described by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Most poets would have contented themselves with telling us, that he resembled, in every particular, the living Crugal ; that his form and dress were the same, only his face more pale and sad ; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Ossian sets before our eyes a spirit from the invisible world, distinguished by all those features, which a strong astonished imagination would give to a ghost. " A dark-red stream of fire comes down from the hill. Crugal sat upon the beam ; he that lately fell by the hand of Swaran, striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like the beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying flames. Dark is the wound of his breast. The stars dim-twinkled through his form ; and his voice was like the sound of a distant stream." The circumstance of the stars being beheld, " dim-twinkling through his form," is wonderfully picturesque, and conveys the most lively impression of his thin and shadowy substance. The attitude in which he is afterward placed, and the speech put into his mouth, are full of that solemn and awful sublimity, which suits the subject. " Dim, and in tears, he stood, and stretched his pale hand over the hero. Faintly he raised his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy Lego.—My ghost, O Connal ! is on my native hills : but my corse is on the sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never talk with Crugal, or find his lone steps in the heath. I am light as the blast of Cromla ; and I

move like the shadow of mist. Connal, son of Colgar, I see the dark cloud of death. It hovers over the plains of Lena. The sons of green Erin shall fall. Remove from the field of ghosts.—Like the darkened moon he retired in the midst of the whistling blast.”

Several other appearances of spirits might be pointed out, as among the most sublime passages of Ossian's poetry. The circumstances of them are considerably diversified; and the scenery always suited to the occasion. “Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors of night set on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oscar drew his sword.”——Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful scene that is to follow. “Trenmor came from his hill, at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. His sword is a green meteor, half-extinguished. His face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice over the hero: and thrice, the winds of the night roared around. Many were his words to Oscar.—He slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny hill.” To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble description in the book of Job: “In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still: but I could not discern the form thereof. An image was before mine

eves. There was silence ; and I heard a voice.— Shall mortal man be more just than God ?”

As Ossian's supernatural beings are described with a surprising force of imagination, so they are introduced with propriety. We have only three ghosts in Fingal ; that of Crugal, which comes to warn the host of impending destruction, and to advise them to save themselves by retreat ; that of Eirallin, the spouse of Ossian, which calls him to rise and rescue their son from danger ; and that of Agandecca, which, just before the last engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching destruction of her kinsmen and people. In the other poems, ghosts sometimes appear when invoked to foretel futurity ; frequently, according to the notions of these times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death, to those whom they visit ; sometimes they inform their friends at a distance, of their own death ; and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the scenery on some great and solemn occasion. “ A hundred oaks burn to the wind ; and faint light gleams over the heath. The ghosts of Ardden pass through the beam ; and show their dim and distant forms. Comala is half-unseen on her meteor ; and Hidallan is sullen and dim.”—“ The awful faces of other times, looked from the clouds of Crona.”—“ Fercuth ! I saw the ghost of night. Silent he stood on that bank ; his robe of mist flew on the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man he seemed, and full of thought.”

The ghosts of strangers mingle not with those of the natives. “ She is seen ; but not like the daughters of the hill. Her robes are from the strangers' land ; and she is still alone.” When the ghost of

one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is still preserved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghost, in the poem entitled, *The Death of Cuthullin*. He seems to forbode Cuthullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuthullin reproaches him for supposing that he could be intimidated by such prognostics. "Why dost thou bend thy dark eyes on me, ghost of the car-borne Calmar? Wouldst thou frighten me, O Matha's son! from the battles of Cormac? Thy hand was not feeble in war; neither was thy voice for peace. How art thou changed, chief of Lara! if now thou dost advise to fly! Retire thou to thy cave: thou art not Calmar's ghost: he delighted in battle; and his arm was like the thunder of heaven." Calmar makes no return to this seeming reproach: but "He retired in his blast with joy; for he had heard the voice of his praise." This is precisely the ghost of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithstanding all the dissatisfaction he expresses with his state in the region of the dead, as soon as he had heard his son Neoptolemus praised for his gallant behaviour, strode away with silent joy to rejoin the rest of the shades.

It is a great advantage of Ossian's mythology, that it is not local or temporary, like that of most other ancient poets: which of course is apt to seem ridiculous, after the superstitions have passed away on which it was founded. Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amusing;

but far from being always supported with proper dignity. The indecent squabbles among his gods, surely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Ossian's machinery has dignity upon all occasions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper; because coincident with the strain and spirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the subject on which Ossian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always solemn, it is not, however, always dreary or dismal; it is enlivened, as much as the subject would permit, by those pleasant and beautiful appearances, which he sometimes introduces of the spirits of the hill. These are gentle spirits; descending on sun beams, fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices sweet; and their visits to men propitious. The greatest praise that can be given to the beauty of a living woman, is to say, "She is fair as the ghost of the hill; when it moves in a sun-beam at noon, over the silence of Morven." "The hunter shall hear my voice from his booth. He shall fear, but love my voice. For sweet shall my voice be for my friends; for pleasant were they to me."

Besides ghosts, or the spirits of departed men, we find in Ossian some instances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a superior nature to ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and storms, and pour them on the land of the stranger; to overturn forests, and to send death among the people. We have prodigies too; a shower of blood; and when some disaster is befalling at a distance, the sound of death heard on the strings of Ossian's harp: all perfectly



consonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a superstitious imagination in all countries. The description of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the ascent of Malvina into it, deserves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear transcribing the passage, as it must have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Ossian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, opposed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the speech of that awful spirit; the wound which he receives, and the shriek which he sends forth, "as, rolled into himself, he rose upon the wind;" are full of the most amazing and terrible majesty. I know no passage more sublime in the writings of any uninspired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero; which it does to a high degree: nor is it so unnatural or wild a fiction as might at first be thought. According to the notions of those times, supernatural beings were material, and, consequently, vulnerable. The spirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the stone of his power; he plainly considered him as the god of his enemies alone; as a local deity, whose dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his submission. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle the gods whom that chief himself worshipped,

Ossian surely is pardonable for making his hero superior to the god of a foreign territory.

Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect had the author discovered some knowledge of a Supreme Being. Although his silence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious translator in a very probable manner, yet still it must be held a considerable disadvantage to the poetry. For the most august and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry are derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe : and hence the invocation of a Supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers who are conceived as presiding over human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets, as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry is a sensible blank in it ; the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his ; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of *Fingal*, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of *Temora*, the other epic poem. Many of the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of *Temora* requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

The scene of *Temora*, as of *Fingal*, is laid in Ire-

land ; and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince: an undertaking worthy of the justice and heroism of the great Fingal. The action is one and complete. The poem opens with the descent of Fingal on the coast, and the consultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cause of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an episode in the first book. In the progress of the poem, three battles are described, which rise in their importance above one another ; the success is various, and the issue for some time doubtful ; till at last, Fingal brought into distress, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his son Fillan, assumes the command himself, and having slain the king in single combat, restores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps less fire than the other epic poem ; but in return it has more variety, more tenderness, and more magnificence. The reigning idea, so often presented to us, of "Fingal in the last of his fields," is venerable and affecting ; nor could any more noble conclusion be thought of, than the aged hero, after so many successful achievements, taking his leave of battles, and, with all the solemnities of those times, resigning his spear to his son. The events are less crowded in Temora than in Fingal ; actions and characters are more particularly displayed ; we are let into the transactions of both hosts ; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The still, pathetic, and the romantic

scenery of several of the night adventures, so remarkably suited to Ossian's genius, occasion a fine diversity in the poem ; and are happily contrasted with the military operations of the day.

In most of our author's poems the horrors of war are softened by intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In *Fingal* these are introduced as episodes ; in *Temora* we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece, in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the most conspicuous beauties of that poem. The distress of Sulmalla, disguised and unknown among strangers, her tender and anxious concern for the safety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers ; Cathmor's emotion when he first discovers her, his struggles to conceal and suppress his passion, lest it should unman him in the midst of war, though "his soul poured forth in secret, when he beheld her fearful eye," and the last interview between them, when, overcome by her tenderness, he lets her know he had discovered her, and confesses his passion ; are all wrought up with the most exquisite sensibility and delicacy.

Besides the characters which appeared in *Fingal*, several new ones are here introduced ; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheless diversified in a sensible and striking manner. Foldath, for instance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a savage chieftain : bold and daring, but presumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is distinguished on his first appearance as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar ; "His stride is haughty ; his

red eye rolls in wrath." In his person and whole deportment he is contrasted with the mild and wise Hidalla, another leader of the same army, on whose humanity and gentleness he looks with great contempt. He professedly delights in strife and blood. He insults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counsels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his schemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral song to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghosts, was in those days considered as the greatest barbarity. Fierce to the last, he comforts himself in his dying moments with thinking that his ghost shall often leave its blast to rejoice over the graves of those he had slain. Yet Ossian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, some tender circumstances; by the moving description of his daughter Dardulena, the last of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is distinguished by the most humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hospitality to strangers; open to every generous sentiment, and to every soft and compassionate feeling. He is so amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it so as to make Cathmor himself indirectly acknowledge Fingal's superiority, and to appear somewhat apprehensive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Ossian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuthullin, Cathmor, and

Fingal, he has, however, sensibly distinguished each of their characters. Cuthullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wise and great, retaining an ascendant peculiar to himself in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one most highly finished, is Fillan. His character is of that sort for which Ossian shows a particular fondness; an eager, fervent, young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthusiasm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had sketched this in the description of his own son Oscar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan; and as the character is so constant to the epic strain, though, so far as I remember, not placed in such a conspicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Ossian's management of it in this instance.

Fillan was the youngest of all the sons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oscar, by whose fame and great deeds in war we may naturally suppose his ambition to have been highly stimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is described as more rash and fiery. His first appearance is soon after Oscar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a conversation with his brother Ossian, on that occasion, we learn that it was not long since he began to lift the spear. "Few are the marks of my sword in battles; but my soul is fire." He is with some difficulty restrained by Ossian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of signalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked my sword; I go forth with the crowd; I return without my fame." Soon af-

ter, when Fingal, according to custom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was standing forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is represented in the following most picturesque and natural attitude: "On his spear stood the son of Clatho, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes to Fingal; his voice thrice failed him as he spoke. Fillan could not boast of battles; at once he strode away. Bent over a distant stream he stood; the tear hung in his eye. He struck, at times, the thistle's head with his inverted spear." No less natural and beautiful is the description of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occasion. "Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he beheld his son. He beheld him with bursting joy. He hid the big tear with his locks, and turned amidst his crowded soul." The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan rushes amidst the thickest of the foe, saves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and distinguishes himself so in battle, that "the days of old return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices from the cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, whilst it shakes its lonely head on the heath, so joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate, however, and wise, he mixes the praise which he bestows on him with some apprehension of his rashness. "My son, I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. Thou art brave, son of Clatho, but head-long in the strife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind thee; they are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of thy fathers."

On the next day, the greatest and the last of Fil-

lan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the host to battle. Fingal's speech to his troops on this occasion is full of noble sentiment ; and, where he recommends his son to their care, extremely touching. " A young beam is before you ; few are his steps to war. They are few, but he is valiant ; defend my dark-haired son. Bring him back with joy ; hereafter he may stand alone. His form is like his fathers ; his soul is a flame of their fire."—When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero : who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Földath, the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian, if any where, excels himself. Földath being slain, and a general route begun, there was no recourse left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet.—" Wide-spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolgá is rolled along. Fillan hung forward on their steps ; and strewed the heath with dead. Fingal rejoiced over his son.—Blue-shielded Cathmor rose. Son of Alpin, bring the harp ! Give Fillan's praise to the wind ; raise high his praise in my hall, while yet he shines in war. Leave, blue-eyed Clatho ! leave thy hall ; behold that early beam of thine ! The host is withered in its course. No farther look—it is dark——light trembling from the harp, strike, virgins ! strike the sound." The sudden interruption, and suspense of the narration on Cathmor's rising from his hill, the abrupt bursting into the praise of Fillan, and the passionate apostrophe to his mother Clatho,



are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to interest us in Fillan's danger ; and the whole is heightened by the immediate following simile, one of the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent subject of admiration to critics : " Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends from the skirt of his blast. The troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him ; islands shake their heads on the heaving seas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhausted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or, in Ossian's style, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too interesting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the rising of Cathmor, and the danger of his son. But what shall he do ? " Shall Fingal rise to his aid, and take the sword of Luno ? What then shall become of thy fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho ? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, daughter of Inistore ! I shall not quench thy early beam. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire." Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the safety of his son, he withdraws from the sight of the engagement ; and dispatches Ossian in haste to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction : " Father of Oscar ! " addressing him by a title which on this occasion has the highest propriety, " Father of Oscar ! lift the spear : defend the young in arms. But conceal thy steps from Fillan's eyes. He must not know that I doubt his steel." Ossian arrived too late. But unwilling to describe Fillan vanquished, the poet suppresses all the circumstances of the combat with Cathmor ; and only shews us the

dying hero. We see him animated to the end with the same martial and ardent spirit ; breathing his last in bitter regret for being so early cut off from the field of glory. “ Ossian, lay me in that hollow rock. Raise no stone above me, lest one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields ; fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard know where dwells the early-fallen Fillan.” He who, after tracing the circumstances of this story, shall deny that our bard is possessed of high sentiment and high heart, must be strangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the story of Pallas in Virgil, which is of of a similar kind ; and after all the praise he may justly bestow on the elegant and finished description of that amiable author, let him say which of the two poets unfolds most of the human soul. I wave insisting on any more of the particulars in *Temora* ; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and spirit of Ossian’s poetry than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting works of such length as *Fingal* and *Temora*, distinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no less eminent. They are historical poems, generally of the elegiac kind ; and plainly discover themselves to be the work of the same author. One consistent face of manners is every where presented to us ; one spirit of poetry reigns : the masterly hand of Ossian appears throughout ; the same rapid and animated stile ; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart.— Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions

of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject, which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of Fingal. The same race of heroes whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuthullin, Oscar, Connal, and Gaul, return again upon the stage; and Fingal himself is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion, with equal magnificence, nay rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son Oscar, furnish the finest poetical situations that fancy could devise for that tender pathetic which reigns in Ossian's poetry.

On each of these poems there might be room for separate observations, with regard to the conduct and disposition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the descriptions and sentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly-finished piece. The main story is very properly introduced by Clessamor's relation of the adventure of his youth: and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's song of mourning over Moina; in which Ossian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to distinguish him for being an eminent poet as well as warrior. Fingal's song upon this occasion, when "his thousand bards leaned forwards from their seats, to hear the voice of the king," is inferior to no passage in the whole book; and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the seriousness, no less than the sublimity of the strain, is peculiarly suited to the hero's character. In Darithula are assembled almost all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, sons, and brothers, the dis-

tress of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful address to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the transition from thence to the subject, most happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The story is regular, dramatic, interesting to the last.—He who can read it without emotion may congratulate himself, if he pleases, upon being completely armed against sympathetic sorrow. As Fingal had no occasion of appearing in the action of this poem, Ossian makes a very artful transition from his narration, to what was passing in the halls of Selma. The sound heard there on the strings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghosts of their fathers, to receive the heroes falling in a distant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increase the solemnity, and to diversify the scenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the most sublime dignity; and has this advantage, of being more cheerful in the subject, and more happy in the catastrophe, than most of the other poems; though tempered at the same time with episodes in that strain of tender melancholy which seems to have been the great delight of Ossian and the bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly distinguished by high generosity of sentiment. This is carried so far, particularly in the refusal of Gaul, on one side, to take the advantage of a sleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recal into one's mind the manners of chivalry; some resemblance to which may perhaps be suggested by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took rise in an age and country too

remote from those of Ossian, to admit the suspicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real existence, the same military enthusiasm which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Ossian, that is, in the infancy of a rising state, through the operation of the same cause, very naturally produce effects of the same kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal system, existing only in romance, it will not be thought surprising, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic Bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners should be found among them, as much, at least, as among the Troubadors, or strolling Provençal Bards, in the 10th or 11th century, whose songs, it is said, first gave rise to those romantic ideas of heroism which for so long a time enchanted Europe. Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love-scenes have native tenderness, without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which resemble the most those of romance, concern women who followed their lovers to war disguised in the armour of men; and these are so managed as to produce, in the discovery, several of the most interesting situations; one beautiful instance of which may be seen in *Carri-thura*, another in *Calthon and Colmal*.

*Oithona* presents a situation of a different nature. In the absence of her lover, *Gaul*, she had been carried off and ravished by *Dunrommath*. *Gaul* discovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two

lovers, the sentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occasion, are described with such tender and exquisite propriety, as does the greatest honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author ; and would have been admired in any poet of the most refined age. The conduct of Croma must strike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the succeeding poem. She is therefore introduced in person : “ she has heard a voice in a dream ; she feels the fluttering of her soul ; and in a most moving lamentation, addressed to her beloved Oscar, she sings her own death-song. Nothing could be calculated with more art to sooth and comfort her than the story which Ossian relates. In the young and brave Fovargormo, another Oscar is introduced ; his praises are sung ; and the happiness is set before her of those who die in their youth, “ when their renown is around them ; before the feeble behold them in the hall, and smile at their trembling hands.”

But no where does Ossian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the conclusion of his songs, “ The last sound of the voice of Cona.”

Qualis olor noto positurus littore vitam,  
Ingemit, et mœtis mulcens concentibus auras  
Præsago quæritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably suited to the subject. Every thing is full of that invisible world, into which the aged bard believes himself now ready to enter. ‘The airy hall of Fingal presents itself to his view ; “ he sees the cloud that shall receive his

ghost ; he beholds the mist that shall form his robe when he appears on his hill :” and all the natural objects around him seem to carry the presages of death. “ The thistle shakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head ; it seems to say, I am covered with the drops of heaven ; the time of my departure is near, and the blast that shall scatter my leaves.” Malvina’s death is hinted to him in the most delicate manner by the son of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheosis, or ascent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the story which follows from the mention which Ossian supposes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the highest spirit of poetry. “ And dost thou remember Ossian, O Toscar, son of Conloch ? The battles of our youth were many ; our swords went together to the field.” Nothing could be more proper than to end his songs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now so full ; and who, from first to last, had been such a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The scene of most of Ossian’s poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coast of Ireland opposite to the territories of Fingal. When the scene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from those of Ossian’s native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, customs, and religion of both nations, were the same. They had been separated from one another, by migration, only a few generations, as it should seem, before our poet’s age ; and they still maintained a close and frequent intercourse. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian

coast, or to the islands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sul-malla of Lumon, and Cath-loda, the case is quite altered. Those countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic descent, who, in their manners and religious rites, differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Ossian. His descriptions bear the native marks of one who was present in the expeditions which he relates, and who describes what he had seen with his own eyes. No sooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the islands of Inistore, than we perceive we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the stones and circles of Loda, that is Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and enchantments for which it is well known those northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, who called the forms of night to aid them in their war;" whilst the Caledonian chiefs, who assisted them, are described as standing at a distance, heedless of their rites. That ferocity of manner which distinguished those nations, also becomes conspicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar savageness; even their women are bloody and fierce. The spirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern scald, whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again. "The hawks," Ossian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs say, "rush from all their winds; they are wont to trace my course. We rejoiced three days above the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They came from all their winds, to feast on the fœces of Annir."



Dismissing now the separate consideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make some observations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Description, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always distinguished by his talent for description. A second-rate writer discerns nothing new or particular in the object he means to describe. His conceptions of it are vague and loose; his expressions feeble; and of course the object is presented to us indistinctly, and thus through a cloud. — But a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes; he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which first receives a strong impression of the object; and then, by a proper selection of capital picturesque circumstances employed in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Ossian possesses this descriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof, from the effect which his descriptions produce upon the imaginations of those who read him with any degree of attention and taste. Few poets are more interesting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country, become familiar; we even think we could draw the figure of his ghosts. In a word, whilst reading him we are transported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. — Such,

for instance, as the scenery with which *Temora* opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there presented to us ; the description of the young prince Cormac, in the same book ; and the ruins of Balclutha, in *Cartho*. “ I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls : and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head ; the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows ; the rank grass of the wall waved round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina ; silence is in the house of her fathers.” Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child : “ Have I not seen the fallen Balclutha ? And shall I feast with Comhal’s son ? Comhal ! who threw his fire in the midst of my father’s hall ! I was young, and knew not the cause why the virgins wept. The columns of smoke pleased mine eye, when they rose above my walls : I often looked back with gladness, when my friends fled above the hill. But when the years of my youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen walls. My sigh rose with the morning : and my tears descended with night. Shall I not fight, I said to my soul, against the children of my foes ? And I will fight, O Bard ! I feel the strength of my soul.” In the same poem, the assembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of some impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is described with so many picturesque circumstances, that one imagines himself present in the assembly. “ The king alone beheld

the terrible sight, and he foresaw the death of his people. He came in silence to his hall, and took his father's spear; the mail rattled on his breast. The heroes rose around. They looked in silence on each other, marking the eyes of Fingal. They saw the battle in his face. A thousand shields are placed at once on their arms; and they drew a thousand swords. The hall of Selma brightened around.—The clang of arms ascends. The grey dogs howl in their place. No word is among the mighty chiefs. Each marked the eyes of the king; and half-assumed his spear.”

It has been objected to Ossian, that his descriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much less diversified by circumstances than those of Homer. This is in some measure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where so much displayed as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little history pieces he gives of the persons slain. Nor, indeed, with regard to the talent of description, can too much be said in praise of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are those of nature. But Ossian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects, rather than to amuse himself with particulars of less importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero; but that of a private man seldom stopped his rapid course. Homer's genius was more comprehensive than Ossian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into description.—Ossian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itself was the highest of all, the region of the pathetic and sublime.

We must not imagine, however, that Ossian's battles consist only of general indistinct description.—Such beautiful incidents are sometimes introduced, and the circumstances of the persons slain so much diversified, as show that he could have embellished his military scenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. “One man is stretched in the dust of his native land; he fell, where often he had spread the feast, and often raised the voice of the harp.” The maid of Inistore is introduced, in a moving apostrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, “as rolled in the dust he lifted his faint eyes to the king,” is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who was slain by night, is heard “hissing on the half-extinguished oak,” which had been kindled for giving light. Another, climbing a tree to escape from his foe, is pierced by his spear from behind; “shrieking, panting, he fell; whilst moss and withered branches pursue his fall, and strew the blue arms of Gaul.” Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: “I saw Gaul in his armour, and my soul was mixed with his: for the fire of the battle was in his eyes: he looked to the foe with joy. We spoke the words of friendship in secret; and the lightning of our swords poured together. We drew them behind the wood, and tried the strength of our arms on the empty air.”

Ossian is always concise in his descriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great mistake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended style, is of advantage to

description. On the contrary, such a diffuse manner for the most part weakens it. Any one redundant circumstances is a nuisance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indistinct. "Obstat," as Quintilian says with regard to style, "quidquid non adjuvat." To be concise in description, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No description that rests in generals can possibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. But at the same time, no strong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones. By the happy choice of some one, or of a few that are the most striking, it presents the image more complete, shows us more at one glance than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all prose writers the most concise. He has even a degree of abruptness resembling our author: yet no writer is more eminent for lively description. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, proposes to dismiss him with honour: "Raise to-morrow thy white sails to the wind, thou brother of Agandecca!" he conveys, by thus addressing his enemy, a stronger impression of the emotions then passing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been spent in describing the conflict between resentment against Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the most full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words: "His shield is marked with the strokes of battle; his red eye despises danger."—When Oscar, left alone, was surrounded by foes,

“ he stood,” it is said, “ growing in his place, like the flood of the narrow vale ;” a happy representation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midst of danger, seems to increase in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the sudden rising of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumstances of domestic sorrow occasioned by a young warrior’s first going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by these words : “ Calmar leaned on his father’s spear ; that spear which he brought from Lara’s hall, when the soul of his mother was sad.”

The conciseness of Ossian’s descriptions is the more proper on account of his subjects. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes may, without any disadvantage, be amplified, and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in these. The description may be weakened by being diffuse, yet notwithstanding may be beautiful still. Whereas, with respect to grand, solemn, and pathetic subjects, which are Ossian’s chief field, the case is very different. In these, energy is above all things required. The imagination must be seized at once, or not at all ; and is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.

But Ossian’s genius, though chiefly turned towards the sublime and pathetic, was not confined to it.— In subjects also of grace and delicacy, he discovers the hand of a master. Take for an example the following elegant description of Agandecca, wherein the tenderness of Tibullus seems united with the majesty of Virgil. “ The daughter of the snow overheard, and left the hall of her secret sigh. She

came in all her beauty ; like the moon from the cloud of the east. Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps were like the music of songs. She saw the youth and loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in secret, and she blest the chief of Morven." Several other instances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendship painted by our author with a most natural and happy delicacy.

The simplicity of Ossian's manner adds great beauty to his descriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments ; no forced refinement ; no marks either in style or thought of a studied endeavour to shine or sparkle. Ossian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings, and to speak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one instance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the first book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lovers, two lonely yews are mentioned to have sprung, " whose branches wished to meet on high." This sympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit ; and it is somewhat curious to find this single instance of that sort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The " joy of grief " is one of Ossian's remarkable expressions, several times repeated. If any one shall think that it needs to be justified by a precedent, he may find it twice used by Homer : in the *Iliad*, when Achilles is visited by the ghost of Patroclus ; and in the *Odyssey*, when Ulysses meets his mother in the shades. On both these occasions the heroes, melted with tenderness, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round

the ghost, "that we might," say they, "in mutual embrace, enjoy the delight of grief."

*Κρυερόιο τεταρπόμεθα γόοιο.*

But, in truth, the expression stands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and just expression; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Ossian makes a very proper distinction between this gratification and the destructive effect of overpowering grief. "There is a joy in grief when peace dwells in the breasts of the sad. But sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar, and their days are few." To "give the joy of grief," generally signifies to raise the strain of soft and grave music; and finely characterises the taste of Ossian's age and country. In those days, when the songs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour: gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme; preferably to that light and trifling strain of poetry and music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," said the great Fingal, in the midst of youth and victory, "strike the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song. Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak: and the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O bards! To-morrow we lift the sail."

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages; and when well chosen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and ani-



mated. Besides epithets founded on bodily distinctions, akin to many of Homer's, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildest look, Carril of other times, the mildly-blushing Evirallin; Bragela, the lonely sunbeam of Dun-scaich; a Culdee, the son of the secret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in descriptive poetry, comparisons or similes are the most splendid. These chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem; and as they abound so much in the works of Ossian, and are commonly among the favourite passages of all poets, it may be expected that I should be somewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical simile always supposes two objects brought together, between which there is some near relation or connexion in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be precisely defined. For various, almost numberless, are the analogies formed among objects, by a sprightly imagination. The relation of actual similitude, or likeness of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical comparison. Sometimes a resemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: sometimes a resemblance in one distinguishing property or circumstance. Very often two objects are brought together in a simile, though they resemble one another, strictly speaking, in nothing, only because they raise in the mind a train of similar, and what may be called concordant, ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to quicken and heighten the impression made by the other. Thus, to give an instance from our poet, the pleasure with which an old man looks back on the

exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct resemblance to the beauty of a fine evening : farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Ossian has founded upon this, one of the most beautiful comparisons that is to be met with in any poet. “ Wilt thou not listen, son of the rock, to the song of Ossian ? My soul is full of other times : the joy of my youth returns. Thus the sun appears in the west, after the steps of his brightness have moved behind a storm. The green hills lift their dewy heads. The blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on his staff ; and his grey hair glitters in the beam.” Never was there a finer group of objects. It raises a strong conception of the old man’s joy and elation of heart, by displaying a scene which produces in every spectator a corresponding train of pleasing emotions : the declining sun looking forth in his brightness after a storm ; the cheerful face of all nature ; and the still life finely animated by the circumstance of the aged hero, with his staff and his grey locks ; a circumstance both extremely picturesque in itself, and peculiarly suited to the main object of the comparison. Such analogies and associations of ideas as these are highly pleasing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diversify the scene, they aggrandize the subject ; they keep the imagination awake and sprightly. For as the judgment is principally exercised in distinguishing objects, and remarking the differences among those which seem alike ; so the highest amusement of the imagination is to trace likenesses and agreements among those which seem different.

The principal rules which respect poetical compa-

risons are, that they be introduced on proper occasions, when the mind is disposed to relish them; and not in the midst of some severe and agitating passion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a resemblance neither too near and obvious, so as to give little amusement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, so as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they serve either to illustrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and distinct, or at least, to brighten and embellish it, by a suitable association of images.

Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his allusions will of course be taken from those objects which he sees around him, and which have often struck his fancy. For this reason, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in some measure, acquainted with the natural history of the country where the scene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence so many lions, and tigers, and eagles, and serpents, which we meet with in the similes of modern poets; as if these animals had acquired some right to a place in poetical comparisons for ever, because employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are absurdly used for illustration by us, who know them only at second-hand, or by description. To most readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe lions or tigers by similes taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Ossian is very cor-

rect in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature which he saw before his eyes; and by consequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian scenery; but with the mists, and clouds, and storms, of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in similes than Ossian.— There are in this collection as many, at least, as in the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are sparkling ornaments; and, like all things that sparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their lustre. But if Ossian's similes be too frequent, they have this advantage, of being commonly shorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration less; he just glances aside to some resembling object, and instantly returns to his former track. Homer's similes include a wider range of objects. But in return, Ossian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be said for all those which Homer employs. The sun, the moon, and the stars, clouds and meteors, lightning and thunder, seas and whales, rivers, torrents, winds, ice, rain, snow, dews, mist, fire and smoke, trees and forests, heath and grass and flowers, rocks and mountains, music and songs, light and darkness, spirits and ghosts; these form the circle within which Ossian's comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from birds and beasts; as eagles, sea fowl, the horse, the deer, and the mountain bee; and a very few from such operations of art as were then known. Homer has diversified his imagery by many more allusions to the animal world; to lions, bulls, goats, herds of cattle,

serpents, insects ; and to the various occupations of rural and pastoral life. Ossian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the desert uncultivated state of his country, which suggested to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudest form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous ; and his acquaintance with them was slender, as they were little subjected to the uses of man.

The great objection made to Ossian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the same comparisons. In a work so thick-sown with similes, one could not but expect to find images of the same kind sometimes suggested to the poet by resembling objects ; especially to a poet like Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his lions and bulls, and flocks of sheep, recur with little or no variation ; nay, sometimes in the very same words ? The objection made to Ossian is, however, founded, in a great measure, upon a mistake. It has been supposed by inattentive readers, that wherever the moon, the cloud, or the thunder, returns in a simile, it is the same simile, and the same moon, or cloud, or thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the similes are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in substance the same ; but the image is new ; for the appearance of the object is changed ; it is presented to the fancy in another attitude ; and clothed with new circumstances, to make it suit the different illustrations for which it is employed. In

this lies Ossian's great art : in so happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correspond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one instance the moon, which is very frequently introduced into his comparisons ; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the moon is a greater object of attention than in the climate of Homer ; and let us view how much our poet has diversified its appearance. The shield of a warrior is like " the darkened moon when it moves a dun circle through the heavens." The face of a ghost, wan and pale, is like " the beam of the setting moon." And a different appearance of a ghost, thin and indistinct, is like " the new moon seen through the gathered mist, when the sky pours down its flaky snow, and the world is silent and dark ;" or, in a different form still, is like " the watery beam of the moon, when it rushes from between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on the field." A very opposite use is made of the moon in the description of Agandecca : " She came in all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the east." Hope, succeeded by disappointment, is " joy rising on her face, and sorrow returning again, like a thin cloud on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generosity, " His face brightened like the full moon of heaven, when the clouds vanish away, and leave her calm and broad in the midst of the sky." Venvela is " bright as the moon when it trembles o'er the western wave ; but the soul of the guilty Uthal is " dark as the troubled face of the moon, when it foretels the storm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon allusion, it is said of Cor-

mac, who was to die in his early years, "Nor long shalt thou lift the spear, mildly shining beam of youth? Death stands dim behind thee, like the darkened half of the moon behind its growing light."

Another instance of the same nature may be taken from mist, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Ossian, he applies to a variety of purposes, and pursues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is "like the mist of Cromla, when it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of the west."—"The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist, that rising from a lake pours on the silent vale. The green flowers are filled with dew. The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone." But, for the most part, mist is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. "The soul of Nathos was sad, like the sun in the day of mist, when his face is watery and dim." "The darkness of old age comes like the mist of the desert." The face of a ghost is "pale as the mist of Cromla." "The gloom of battle is rolled along as mist that is poured on the valley, when storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven." Fame, suddenly departing, is likened to "mist that flies away before the rustling wind of the vale." A ghost, slowly vanishing, to "mist that melts by degrees on the sunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared to a pestilential fog. "I love a foe like Cathmor," says Fingal, "his soul is great; his arm is strong; his battles are full of fame. But the little soul is like a vapour that hovers round the

marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave ; and it sends forth the dart of death." This is a simile highly finished. But there is another which is still more striking, founded also on mist, in the fourth book of *Temora*. Two factious chiefs are contending: Cathmor, the king, interposes, rebukes, and silences them. The poet intends to give us the highest idea of Cathmor's superiority ; and most effectually accomplishes his intention by the following happy image. " They sunk from the king on either side, like two columns of morning mist, when the sun rises between them on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side ; each towards its reedy pool." These instances may sufficiently show with what richness of imagination Ossian's comparisons abound, and at the same time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it must be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison of their similes more than of other passages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer and Ossian have conducted some images of the same kind. This might be shown in many instances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general store-house of all imagery, the ground-work of their comparisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only a few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr. Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in



the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description ; on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer. The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words\*. “ When now the conflicting hosts joined in the field of battle, then were mutually opposed shields, and swords, and the strength of armed men. The bossy bucklers were dashed against each other. The universal tumult rose. There were mingled the triumphant shouts and the dying groans of the victors and the vanquished. The earth streamed with blood. As when winter torrents, rushing from the mountains, pour into a narrow valley their violent waters. They issue from a thousand springs, and mix in the hollowed channel. The distant shepherd hears on the mountain their roar from afar. Such was the terror and the shout of the engaging armies.” In another passage, the poet, much in the manner of Ossian, heaps simile on simile, to express the vastness of the idea with which his imagination seems to labour. “ With a mighty shout the hosts engage. Not so loud roars the wave of ocean, when driven against the shore by the whole force of the boisterous north ; not so loud in the woods of the mountain, the noise of the flame, when rising in its fury to consume the forest ; not so loud the wind among the lofty oaks, when the wrath of the storm rages ; as was the clamour of the Greek and Tro-

\* Iliad, iv. 46 ; and Iliad viii. 60.

jans, when, roaring terrible, they rushed against each other\*."

To these descriptions and similes, we may oppose the following from Ossian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the same kind employed; commonly less extended: but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characterises our poet. "As autumn's dark storms pour from two echoing hills, towards each other approached the heroes. As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark in battle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixed his strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clanging, sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high; blood bursts and smokes around.—As the troubled noise of the ocean, when roll the waves on high; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the noise of battle."—"As roll a thousand waves to the rock, so Swaran's host came on; as meets a rock a thousand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death raises all his voices around, and mixes with the sound of shields.—The field echoes from wing to wing, as a hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red son of the furnace."—"As a hundred winds on Morven; as the streams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly successive over heaven; or as the dark ocean assaults the shore of the desert; so roaring, so vast, so terrible, the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath." In several of these images there is a remarkable similarity to Homer's; but what follows is superior to any comparison that Homer uses on this subject. "The groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night, when the

\* Iliad, xiv. 393.

cloud bursts on Cona ; and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind." Never was an image of more awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. "As when a shepherd," says Homer, "beholds from the rock a cloud borne along the sea by the western wind ; black as pitch it appears from afar sailing over the ocean, and carrying the dreadful storm. He shrinks at the sight, and drives his flock into the cave : Such, under the Ajaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened phalanx to the war\*."—"They came," says Ossian, "over the desert like stormy clouds, when the winds roll them over the heath ; their edges are tinged with lightning ; and the echoing groves foresee the storm." The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a sublime idea ; but the shepherd and his flock, render Homer's simile more picturesque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Ossian gives no more than the main image, strong and full. Homer adds circumstances and appendages, which amuse the fancy by enlivening the scenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army to "clouds that are settled on the mountain-top, in the day of calmness, when the strength of the north wind sleeps†." Ossian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a disordered army, to "the mountain cloud, when the blast hath entered its womb, and scatters the curling gloom on every side." Ossian's clouds assume a great many forms ; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fer-

\* Iliad, iv. 275.

† Iliad v. 522.

tile source of imagery to him. "The warriors followed their chiefs, like the gathering of the rainy clouds, behind the red meteors of heaven." An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to "clouds that, having long threatened rain, retire slowly behind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after she had determined to die, is lively and delicate. "Her soul was resolved, and the tear was dried from her wildly-looking eye. A troubled joy rose on her mind, like the red path of the lightning on a stormy cloud." The image also of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating in silence the assassination of Oscar, until the moment came when his designs were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and complete in all its parts. "Cairbar heard their words in silence, like the cloud of a shower; it stands dark on Cromla, till the lightning bursts its side. The valley gleams with red light; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood the silent king of Temora; at length his words are heard."

Homer's comparison of Achilles to the Dog-Star, is very sublime. "Priam beheld him rushing along the plain, shining in his armour, like the star of autumn; bright are its beams, distinguished amidst the multitude of stars in the dark hour of night. It rises in its splendour; but its splendour is fatal; betokening to miserable men the destroying heat\*." The first appearance of Fingal is, in like manner, compared by Ossian, to a star or meteor. "Fingal, tall in his ship, stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible was the gleam of his steel; it was like the green meteor of death, sitting in the heath of Malmor, whan the traveller is alone, and the broad moon

\* Iliad, xiii. 26.

is darkened in heaven." The hero's appearance, in Homer is more magnificent; in Ossian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a storm, is a similitude frequent among poets for describing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the most beautiful, by far, of his comparisons, founded on this subject, indeed one of the most beautiful in the whole *Iliad*, is that on the death of Euphorbus. "As the young and verdant olive, which a man hath reared with care in a lonely field, where the springs of water bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; it is fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loaded with white blossoms; when the sudden blast of a whirlwind descending, roots it out from its bed, and stretches it on the dust\*." To this, - elegant as it is, we may oppose the following simile of Ossian's, relating to the death of the three sons of Usnoth, "They fell, like three young oaks which stood alone on the hill. The traveller saw the lovely trees, and wondered how they grew so lonely. The blast of the desert came by night, and laid their green heads low. Next day he returned; but they were withered, and the heath was bare." Malvina's allusion to the same object, in her lamentation over Oscar, is so exquisitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place also. "I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar! with all my branches around me. But thy death came like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers; but no leaf of mine arose." Several of Ossian's similes, taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diversified with well chosen circumstances; such as that upon

the death of Ryno and Orla: "They have fallen like the oak of the desert; when it lies across a stream, and withers in the wind of the mountains." Or that which Ossian applies to himself; "I, like an ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place; the blast hath lopped my branches away; and I tremble at the winds of the north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Ossian makes the same use of comparisons taken from spirits and ghosts. "Swaran roared in battle, like the shrill spirit of a storm that sits dim on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner." His people gathered round Erragon, "like storms around the ghost of night, when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the stranger."—"They fell before my son, like groves in the desert, when an angry ghost rushes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand." In such images Ossian appears in his strength; for very seldom have supernatural beings been painted with so much sublimity, and such force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, must yield to him in similes formed upon these. Take, for instance, the following, which is the most remarkable of this kind in the *Iliad*. "Meriones followed Idomeneus to battle, like Mars, the destroyer of men, when he rushes to war. Terror, his beloved son, strong and fierce, attends him; who fills with dismay the most valiant hero. They come from Thrace, armed against the Ephyrians and Phleggyans; nor do they regard the prayers of either; but dispose of success at their will."\* The idea here is undoubtedly noble: but

\* *Iliad*, xiii. 298.

observe what a figure Ossian sets before the astonished imagination, and with what sublimely terrible circumstances he has heightened it. "He rushed in the sound of his arms, like the dreadful spirit of Loda, when he comes in the roar of a thousand storms, and scatters battles from his eyes. He sits on a cloud over Lochlin's seas. His mighty hand is on his sword. The winds lift his flaming locks. So terrible was Cuthullin in the day of his fame."

Homer's comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Ossian we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similes; particularly the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, "why didst thou come over the dark-blue wave to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similes on this subject I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is, "Sit thou on the heath, O bard! and let us

hear thy voice ; it is pleasant as the gale of the spring that sighs on the hunter's ear, when he wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill." The other contains a short, but exquisitely tender image, accompanied with the finest poetical painting. "The music of Carril was like the memory of joys that are past, pleasant, and mournful to the soul. The ghosts of departed bards heard it from Slimora's side. Soft sounds spread along the wood : and the silent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would such imagery and such scenery have made, had they been presented to us adorned with the sweetness and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have chosen all along to compare Ossian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reason. There is much nearer correspondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of society ; both are originals ; both are distinguished by simplicity, sublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman stateliness which he every where maintains, admit no parrallel with the abrupt boldness, and enthusiastic warmth, of the Celtic bard. In one article indeed there is a resemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer ; and thereby agrees more with Ossian ; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, those of the other more strong ; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart.

A resemblance may be sometimes observed between Ossian's comparisons, and those employed by the sacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they use it with the utmost propriety. The



imagery of Scripture exhibits a soil and climate altogether different from those of Ossian ; a warmer country, a more smiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine-press, and the threshing floor, are often presented to us, the cedar and the palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The similes are, like Ossian's, generally short, touching on one point of resemblance, rather than spread out into little episodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpressible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations shall rush like the rushings of many waters ; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall fly far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the down of the thistle before the whirlwind\*."

Besides formal comparisons, the poetry of Ossian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors : such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala : "She was covered with the light of beauty ; but her heart was the house of pride." This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which, without pausing to form a regular simile, paints the object at one stroke. "Thou art to me the beam of the east, rising in a land unknown." "In peace, thou art the gale of spring ; in war the mountain storm." "Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely beam ! soon hast thou set on our hills ! The steps of thy departure were stately, like the moon on the blue trem-

\* Isaiah xviii. 15.

bling wave. But thou hast left us in darkness, first of the maids of Lutha!—Soon hast thou set, Malvina! but thou risest like the beam of the east, among the spirits of thy friends, where they sit in their stormy halls, the chambers of the thunder.” This is correct, and finely supported. But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense. “Trathal went forth with the stream of his people; but they met a rock; Fingal stood unmoved; broken they rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll in safety; the spear of the king pursued their flight.”

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experience, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten men’s ideas and expressions. Yet Ossian’s hyperboles appear not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing, no doubt, to the more cultivated state in which, as was before shown, poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among most other barbarous nations. One of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuthullin of the landing of the foe. But this is so far from deserving censure that it merits praise, as being, on that occasion, natural and proper. The scout arrives, trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no passion disposes men to hyperbolize more than terror. It both annihilates themselves in their

own apprehension, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader, of the land of Canaan. "The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature: and there we saw giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight §."

With regard to personifications, I formerly observed that Ossian was sparing, and I accounted for his being so. Allegorical personages he has none; and their absence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of those shadowy beings, which have not the support even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, seldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too visible and phantastic; and overthrows that impression of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the serious and pathetic scenes of Ossian especially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in tragedy: serving only unseasonably to amuse the fancy, whilst they stopped the current, and weakened the force of passion.

With apostrophes, or addresses to persons absent or dead, which have been in all ages the language of

§ Numbers, xii. 32, 33.

passion, our poet abounds ; and they are among his highest beauties. Witness the apostrophe, in the first book of Fingal, to the maid of Inistore, whose lover had fallen in battle ; and that inimitably fine one of Cuthullin to Bragela at the conclusion of the same book. He commands the harp to be struck in her praise ; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately suggesting to him a crowd of tender ideas, " Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, " to find the sails of Cuthullin ? The sea is rolling far distant, and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as at that moment really in this situation, he becomes afraid of the harm she may receive from the inclemency of the night ; and with an enthusiasm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious strain of modern poetry, " Retire," he proceeds, " retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feasts, and think of the times that are past ; for I will not return till the storm of war has ceased. O Connal, speak of wars and arms, and send her from my mind ; for lovely with her raven hair is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan." This breathes all the native spirit of passion and tenderness.

The addresses to the sun, to the moon, and to the evening star, must draw the attention of every reader of taste, as among the most splendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious, to need any particular comment. In one passage only of the address to the moon, there appears some obscurity. " Whither dost thou retire from thy course when the darkness of thy countenance grows ? Hast thou thy hall like Ossian ?

Dwellest thou in the shadow of grief? Have thy sisters fallen from heaven? Are they who rejoiced with thee at night no more? Yes, they have fallen, fair light! and thou dost often retire to mourn." We may be at a loss to comprehend, at first view, the ground of these speculations of Ossian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumstances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the present situation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loss of all his friends, is meditating on the different phases of the moon. Her waning and darkness, presents to his melancholy imagination the image of sorrow; and presently the idea arises, and is indulged, that, like himself, she retires to mourn over the loss of other moons, or of stars, whom he calls her sisters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkness suggested the idea of mourning, and mourning suggested nothing so naturally to Ossian as the death of beloved friends. An instance precisely similar of this influence of passion may be seen in a passage which has always been admired of Shakspeare's *King Lear*. The old man on the point of distraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, sees Edgar appear disguised like a beggar and a madman.

*Lear*.—Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Couldst thou leave nothing? Didst thou give them all?

*Kent*.—He hath no daughters, sir.

*Lear*.—Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature

To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.

The apostrophe to the winds, in the opening of *Dar-thula*, is in the highest spirit of poetry. "But the winds deceive thee, O *Dar-thula*; and deny the woody *Etha* to thy sails. These are not thy mountains, *Nathos*, nor is that the roar of thy climbing waves. The hills of *Cairbar* are near, and the towers of the foe lift their head. Where have ye been, ye southern winds! when the sons of my love were deceived? But ye have been sporting on plains, and pursuing the thistle's beard. O that ye had been rustling in the sails of *Nathos*, till the hills of *Etha* rose! till they rose in their clouds, and saw their coming chief." This passage is remarkable for the resemblance it bears to an expostulation with the wood-nymphs, on their absence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, *Virgil* has copied from *Theocritus*, and *Milton* has very happily imitated from both.

Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorseless deep  
 Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?  
 For neither were ye playing on the steep  
 Where your old bards, the famous *Druids* lie;  
 Nor on the shaggy top of *Mona*. high;  
 Nor yet where *Deva* spreads her wizard stream.

LYCIDAS.

Having now treated fully of *Ossian's* talents, with respect to description and imagery, it only remains to make some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situation of those who utter them. In this respect *Ossian* is as correct as most writers. His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case had the sentiments been un-

natural or out of place. A variety of personages, of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Dar-thula throughout be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

The sublime is not confined to sentiment alone. It belongs to description also; and whether in description or in sentiment, imports such ideas presented to the mind, as to raise it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and astonishment. This is the highest effect either of eloquence or poetry; and to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the strongest and warmest conception of some object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Ossian, may, I think, sufficiently appear from many of the passages I have already had occasion to quote. To produce more instances were superfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal, if the address to the sun in Carthon, if the similes founded upon ghosts and spirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admired as examples, and illustrious ones too, of the true poetical sublime, I confess myself entirely ignorant of this quality of writing.

All the circumstances, indeed, of Ossian's composition, are favourable to the sublime, more perhaps than to any other species of beauty. Accuracy and

correctness, artfully connected narration, exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful will appear to more advantage in the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes; but, amidst the rude scenes of nature, amidst rocks and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles, dwells the sublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the lesser graces, and perfectly consistent with a certain noble disorder. It associates naturally with that grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes our author. For the sublime is an awful and serious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of trouble, and terror, and darkness.

*Ipsè pater, mediâ nimborum in nocte, corusca  
Fulmina molitur dextra quo maxima motu  
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; et mortalia corda  
Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor; ille, flagranti  
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo  
Dejicit,——*

VIRG. GEORG. I.

Simplicity and conciseness are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments, not on the pomp of his expressions. The main secret of being sublime is to say great things in few, and in plain words; for every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells, when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it, in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the



sublime is gone. Hence the concise and simple style of Ossian gives great advantage to his sublime conceptions; and assists them in seizing the imagination with full power.

Sublimity, as belonging to sentiment, coincides in a great measure with magnanimity, heroism, and generosity of sentiment. Whatever discovers human nature in its greatest elevation; whatever bespeaks a high effort of soul; or shows a mind superior to pleasures, to dangers, and to death; forms what may be called the moral or sentimental sublime. For this Ossian is eminently distinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble sentiment throughout all his works. Particularly in all the sentiments of Fingal there is a grandeur and loftiness proper to swell the mind with the highest ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he pursues are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generosity more than by force. A portion of the same spirit actuates all the other heroes.—Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debasing passions among Fingal's warriors; no spirit of avarice or of insult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a desire of being distinguished and remembered for gallant actions; a love of justice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the strain of sentiment in the works of Ossian.

But the sublimity of moral sentiments, if they wanted the softening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and stiff air to poetry. It is

not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in comparison of that deep interest which the heart takes in tender and pathetic scenes, where, by a mysterious attachment to the objects of compassion, we are pleased and delighted, even whilst we mourn. With scenes of this kind Ossian abounds ; and his high merit in these is incontestable. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes ; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the least sensibility, will question. The general character of his poetry is the heroic mixed with the elegiac strain ; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expresses it, “ the joy of grief ;” it is visible, that, on all moving subjects, he delights to exert his genius ; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic situations, than what his works present. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation ; no subtile refinements on sorrow ; no substitution of description in place of passion. Ossian felt strongly himself ; and the heart when uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for instance, can be more moving than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune ? Gaul, the son of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had suffered, comes to her rescue. Their meeting is tender in the highest degree. He proposes to engage her foe, in single combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himself shall fall. “ And shall the daughter of Nuath live ?” she replied with a burst-

ing sigh. " Shall I live in Tromathon, and the son of Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; nor my soul careless as that sea, which lifts its blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath the storm. The blast, which shall lay thee low, shall spread the branches of Oithona on earth. We shall wither together, son of ear-born Morni! The narrow house is pleasant to me, and the gray stone of the dead; for never more will I leave thy rocks, sea-surrounded Tromathon!—Chief of Strumon, why camest thou over the waves to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast? Why didst thou come, O Gaul, to hear my departing sigh?—O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright beams of my fame! Then had my years come on with joy; and the virgins would bless my steps. But I fall in youth, son of Morni, and my father shall blush in his hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuthullin's expressions of grief after his defeat, we behold the sentiments of a hero, generous, but desponding.—The situation is remarkably fine. Cuthullin, roused from his cave, by the noise of battle, sees Fingal victorious in the field. He is described as kindling at the sight. " His hand is on the sword of his fathers: his red rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to rush to battle; and thrice did Connal stop him; suggesting that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the show of superfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuthullin yields to this generous sentiment; but we see it stinging him to the heart with the sense of his own disgrace

“ Then, Carril, go,” replied the chief, “ and greet the king of Morven. When Lochlin falls away like a stream after rain, and the noise of the battle is over, then be thy voice sweet in his ear, to praise the king of swords. Give him the sword of Caithbat ; for Cuthullin is worthy no more to lift the arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghosts of the lonely Cromla ! Ye souls of chiefs that are no more ! Be ye the companions of Cuthullin, and talk to him in the cave of his sorrow. For never more shall I be renowned among the mighty in the land. I am like a beam that has shone : like a mist that has fled away ; when the blast of the morning came, and brightened the shaggy side of the hill. Connal ! talk of arms no more : departed is my fame. My sighs shall be on Cromla’s wind ; till my footsteps cease to be seen. And thou, white bosomed Bragela ! mourn over the fall of my fame ; for vanquished, I will never return to thee, thou sun-beam of Dunscaich ! ”

———Æstuat ingens

Uno in corde pudor, luctusque, et conscia virtus.

Besides such extended pathetic scenes, Ossian frequently pierces the heart by a single unexpected stroke. When Oscar fell in battle, “ No father mourned his son slain in youth : no brother, his brother of love : they fell without tears, for the chief of the people was low.” In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse’s arms has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating to the death of Cuthullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force: “ And

is the son of Semo fallen?" said Carril with a sigh. "Mournful are Tura's walls, and sorrow dwells at Dunscaich. Thy spouse is left alone in her youth; the son of thy love is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and ask her why she weeps. He shall lift his eyes to the wall, and see his father's sword.—Whose sword is that? he will say; and the soul of his mother is sad." Soon after Fingal had shown all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner, his sons to the chase. "Call," says he, "Fillan and Ryno—But he is not here—My son rests on the bed of death." This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet.

If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife.—

My wife!—My wife!—What wife?—I have no wife—

Oh, insupportable! O heavy hour! OTHELLO.

The contrivance of the incidents in both poets is similar; but the circumstances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confusion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himself, and suppresses his rising grief.

The contrast which Ossian frequently makes between his present and his former state, diffuses over his whole poetry a solemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impression on every heart. The conclusion of the songs of Selma is particularly calculated for this purpose. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a stronger and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were the words of the bards in the days of the song; when the king heard the mu-

sic or harps, and the tales of other times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice of Cona\*; the first among a thousand bards. But age is now on my tongue, and my soul has failed. I hear, sometimes, the ghosts of bards, and learn their pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind! I hear the call of years. They say, as they pass along, Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame. Roll on, ye dark-brown years! for ye bring no joy in your course. Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has failed. The sons of the song are gone to rest. My voice remains like a blast that roars lonely on the sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The dark moss whistles there, and the distant mariner sees the waving trees."

Upon the whole, if to feel strongly, and to describe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Ossian must, after fair examination, be held to possess that genius in a high degree. The question is not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this or that passage might not have been worked up with more art and skill, by some writer of happier times? A thousand such cold and frivolous criticisms are altogether indecisive as to his genuine merit. But has he the spirit, the fire, the inspiration of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his sentiments? Does he interest by his descriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? These are the great characteristics

\* Ossian himself is poetically called the voice of Cona.

of true poetry. Where these are found, he must be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon slight defects. A few beauties of this high kind transcend whole volumes of faultless mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt Ossian may sometimes appear, by reason of his conciseness; but he is sublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extensive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fullness and accuracy of description, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in strength of imagination, in grandeur of sentiment, in native majesty of passion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear stream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being destitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as strength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other respects much less than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but must judge the translation to deserve the highest praise, on account of its beauty and elegance. Of its faithfulness and accuracy, I have been assured by persons skilled in the Gaelic tongue, who from their youth were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another: to translate literally, and yet with such a

glow of poetry ; to keep alive so much passion, and support so much dignity throughout ; is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly, as Mr. Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress ; divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their native languages. If then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet ; and not to please only, but often to command, to transport, to melt, the heart ; we may very safely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius ; and we may boldly assign him a place among those whose works are to last for ages.

FINIS.















